Interview with Hermann Frederick Eilts

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR HERMANN FREDERICK EILTS

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This is an interview with Ambassador Hermann Frederick Eilts on August 12th and 13th, 1988 conducted by William Brewer for The Association for Diplomatic Studies in Washington.

Q: Ambassador Eilts, I think we can begin, and I would like to start by asking when and why you happened to decide on a Foreign Service career?

EILTS: Well, when, would be in the period just before World War II and I was a student at Ursinus College. I had long had an interest in diplomacy. My father had been in the German Diplomatic Service and, although he had been in the United States since World War II and out of diplomacy, it was something that was very much talked about in the family. So when I went to college it was always my intention to try to get into the Foreign Service. When the appropriate time came at the end of World War II and examinations were again given, I took the examination and was fortunate enough to pass.

Q: I note that you speedily became an Arabic language and area officer after you got into the Service. Did you have that intention beforehand, or how did this arise?

EILTS: No, I did not. This is something that came about at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, when I left Ursinus College. I accelerated at Ursinus and then went to Fletcher in the hope of being able to take a M.A. before I would have to go into the Army. I didn't have the money so I had to find a job there. At the time Fletcher was one of those institutions that had a contract with a new division of the Department of State called the Division of Territorial Studies. It farmed out, to various graduate students, projects, studies that were to be used by an American peace delegation, whenever a peace conference took place. As I said, Fletcher was one of those. I very quickly got a job with a Professor Norman Padelford, who was Professor of International Law, who had a project on the boundaries of Hungary. With my European background, my intention of going to Fletcher had been to concentrate on European affairs. This kind of a project seemed perfectly suited. The following day, or the day after that, the Dean of Fletcher—a man named Halford Hoskins, who was one of our first Middle Easterners, called me in and said, “I've seen by your file that you've done a course in international law.” My professor, who was teaching at Bryn Mawr, was one of those whose classes I was able to attend while in undergraduate school. The professor had written a very nice letter about me to Fletcher, an endorsement. Hoskins said, “I have a project that I want you to undertake on the legal status of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.” I remember it as it were yesterday. I said, “Thank you Dean Hoskins. I've already got a job consistent with my interest in Europe.” The Dean looked at me, pushed his glasses down over his eyes, and said, “Young man, if you want a job here, you better take this one.” So I rushed out to Padelford and told him what had happened, and Padelford rushed in to see Hoskins and came out a little while later, angry, and saying, “He has the money-bags. He holds the money from the Division of Territorial Studies, and he insists that you take this job, or you don't have any.” So I did that with a heavy heart. I had to start learning Arabic. The only Arabic course that was offered in all of the Boston area at the time was at the Harvard School of Divinity. I took some courses on the Middle East under Hoskins—Hoskins was not a very nice person, but he was a great teacher. By the time I had to leave Fletcher four months later—I was drafted into the Army—I had already found the Middle East so new, so different, and interesting. There were so

few Middle Easterners in our country at the time that I had decided that if I got out of the war alive, I would continue in the Middle Eastern field.

Then when I went into the Army, the Army saw that I had done four months of Arabic, they thought I was probably the greatest Arabist in the world. They had no idea how little Arabic one learns in four months. So they put me into various positions, for a period of time, that had to do with Middle Eastern matters. Then, when the war ended, by which time Hoskins had left Fletcher and started SAIS in Washington, I followed him, but had already determined to go into the Middle Eastern field.

When I got into the Foreign Service, the Foreign Service, because I was one of the first young officers who had studied Middle East matters, put me into Middle East posts and I continued there.

Q: Well, that certainly is a very logical explanation. Things don't often happen that logically in the Foreign Service. I see that your first assignment was in Tehran after which you were assigned to the Embassy in Jeddah. I wondered particularly; you may have some other things you wish to say about either of these assignments; but one thing occurs to me. At that early stage in Saudi Arabia, ARAMCO, the Arabian-American Oil Company, had been active there for some years and had kind of carried the flag, and represented America, and the Embassy was something a little new and surprising and different. I wonder if you have any comments on that. Was there any friction, any problem, or did it facilitate the Embassy's duty that this happened this way?

EILTS: I think generally speaking, at least during my first period in Jeddah, the relationships between what was first a Legation and then became an Embassy, and the ARAMCO officers were pretty good. There was not a great deal of difficulty. Nevertheless, it was clear that the ARAMCO people, many of whom had been there for many years, knew much about Saudi Arabia, had a reservoir of information on Saudi Arabia and had been the principal and initial elements in the association between the United States

and Saudi Arabia, thought of themselves as the authorities on the Kingdom. I think it was largely the work of Rives Childs, first as Minister, then as Ambassador, who was gradually able to put it across to the Saudi Arabian authorities at the time that if they were talking about oil matters, that was something they should discuss with ARAMCO; if they were talking about political matters, anything of that sort and the assistance that they might want from the United States, then they should come to him. It took a little while to bring that about, but I think it was helped by a negative development. By the negative development, I mean that in the period '47-'48 in particular, the Arab-Israeli crisis broke out. Israel was created in 1948 and the Saudis were very upset. The Saudis were upset about the American position and Amir Faisal, who at that time was Foreign Minister, felt that Secretary of State Marshall had betrayed him in what the US had done in approving UN Resolution 181, which created a Jewish state. Marshall had not in any way tried to do that. Nevertheless that was the Saudi feeling: a strong sense of Saudi bitterness toward the US manifested itself. Clearly this was an issue that ARAMCO was not anxious to get itself involved in. ARAMCO was only too happy to let the Legation, later the Embassy, handle such discussions. And out of all of this then came a gradual realization by the Saudi authorities that they had to deal with official US representatives. This was also because the Foreign Ministry was in Jeddah and ARAMCO's main offices were, of course, in Dhahran, where there were no Foreign Ministry representatives, the Saudi government too came to realize that foreign relations, issues, not only those with the United States, should be handled through the Embassy.

Now for a long period of time it was still clear that ARAMCO had much more information on Saudi Arabia than the Embassy did. But as time went along, this changed. We sent a series of really outstanding officers to Saudi Arabia in those early days. And it wasn't too long before the officers at the American Embassy in Jeddah could provide as much information on Saudi Arabia, and indeed perhaps more, especially with respect to Saudi foreign relations—Saudi relations with the Arab states, Saudi attitudes toward the Palestinian issue—much more than ARAMCO could. And out of that the twin

pronged dialogue continued, the Saudis dealing with the Embassy on political matters, with ARAMCO on petroleum matters. The two sides were perfectly willing to let this arrangement go on. There was one exception when the Buraimi issue came up in 1950 with the British, it was ARAMCO that was very much involved in that and took some steps to prepare studies for the Saudi Arabian government. ARAMCO's action, it could be argued, went beyond, at least in my judgement, the legitimate functions of an oil company. The research division of ARAMCO was superbly staffed and had done tremendous work on the loyalties of the tribes in the last century and the present century. All of this became part of the Saudi Arabian “memorial” presented to an arbitral tribunal. But that was the one exception where ARAMCO, it seems to me, got into the political arena and went out ahead of anything the United States Government or the American Embassy considered appropriate.

Q: Buraimi is of course an oasis area in eastern Arabia south of the Trucial Coast. After your assignment in Jeddah, in 1950 you were then at long last actually given Arabic training by the Department of State in Washington and at the University of Pennsylvania, I believe.

EILTS: That's true.

Q: Would you have any comment on that training?

EILTS: I think that was very useful. The training at the Foreign Service Institute was for a six-month period. It was in spoken Arabic and gave one almost total immersion in the language that was helpful. The period at the University of Pennsylvania was largely classical Arabic, under Professor Franz Rosenthal, who was a superb classical Arabist, but whose speciality was really medieval Arab sciences. My period at the University of Pennsylvania was both a combination of Arabic language and Arab, if you will, cultural and historical training. It was clearly very useful for someone who would spend the rest of his life, or much of the rest of his life, in the Arab World.

Q: And then after that year, in the spring of 1951, you were assigned as Principal Officer and Consul in our Consulate in Aden. Am I not right that in that capacity you had particular responsibilities for the Kingdom of Yemen?

EILTS: Yes. I was initially assigned to the American Consulate in Aden, not as Principal Officer but as a supernumerary officer to handle Yemen affairs. We had no resident diplomatic mission in Yemen at the time. People from Aden went up to Yemen regularly. It was the view of the people in the Department of State that the handling of Yemen affairs from Aden was too much of a burden on the then Consul, so an additional officer was named to the American Consulate at Aden to handle Yemeni affairs. I was designated for that task. We would go up to Taiz—the Consul continued his interest in Yemen—the Consul and I would go up, say at the beginning of the month, whatever the month might be, spend ten days up there and then come back to Aden. I would then do the reports and send them from Aden because we had no communication facilities out of Yemen. The same kind of pattern would be repeated each month.

Now when the Consul left after about seven months on transfer, I was named Principal Officer at Aden, but continued the system of shuttling back and forth between Aden and Yemen, specifically the city of Taiz where the Imam lived, and in that way conducted US business with Yemen.

Q: I see. Were there particular problems that arose in US-Yemeni relations that required a lot of attention in that period?

EILTS: Well, there were a number of problems that arose. I guess the principal problem that existed at the time, one in which we did not want to get involved because we had no direct interest, but invariably got involved, was the difficulties that the British and the Yemenis were having over border issues. The Yemenis kept asking us for our support and the British kept asking us for our support against the Yemenis. It was something we tried to stay out of. It really involved a greater degree of reporting than one would

normally expect because both sides appealed to us. The main issues involving the United States itself had to do with the beginnings of an AID program. We had not yet really begun one when I left Aden, but it started soon afterward. We had had a number of talks with Yemeni officials right after President Truman had established Point Four, in which offers of Point Four assistance, what later became AID, were made to the Yemeni government. There was an initial reluctance on the part of the Imam to accept it for a number of reasons. He felt the amount wasn't enough. He also felt that the requirement that he had to report, or somebody had to report, on how the money was being used, was an encroachment on Yemeni sovereignty. At the same time it was clear that not only the Imam, but other Yemeni officials were most anxious to get some kind of American assistance. And eventually, as I say, we did mount a small AID program in Yemen, but that was one subject of recurrent discussion.

A third had to do with the famous or infamous, which ever you will, Wendell Philips expedition. Wendell Philips was an American archeologist, at least he called himself that, who obtained from the Yemeni government a concession to do an archeological dig in Marib, the site of the Queen of Sheba's palace, and sent a small group of people out there. Most of them were not archeologists, most were technicians, people of that sort. In due course the Imam became dissatisfied with the pace of things. There weren't enough legitimate archeologists there, so he canceled the concession. At that time Philips, who was not on the ground but spent most of his time in the United States collecting money, came back to Yemen and obtained the Imam's permission for the Philips group to remain in Marib for another ten days. It was the Imam's understanding that they would utilize that time to take out their equipment. Wendell Philips went to Marib but then one fine day, as I remember it was Lincoln's birthday in 1951, he and his party staged a dramatic escape from Marib across the desert into the Aden Protectorate, claiming publicly that the Imam's people were about to murder them all, that they had had to leave behind hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of archeological equipment and that they had barely managed to escape with their lives. Well, it took about a year before that was straightened out.

As you might imagine, since some of Philip's backers were very prominent Americans, appeals were made by those prominent backers to the State Department in Washington, on the assumption that Philips was in the right and the Yemenis were in the wrong. I, as the American Consul in Aden, also handling affairs in Yemen, had to find a way of getting this equipment out. Eventually it turned out that the Imam's argument was that the contract, Philips' contract, had been violated. He, Philips, had not fulfilled the terms of the contract, hence the Imam wanted him out. The suggestion that there had been any effort to kill members of the Philips party, the Imam indignantly denied. The Philips party, it developed, owed local tribes, that is people who had worked for the enterprise in Marib, something like 8,000 Maria Theresa dollars—those large German silver coins that they first started minting in Austria in 1792 and are still minting, and which were the unit of local currency in Yemen. The amount at that time, in terms of American dollars, would have been perhaps $6,000, no more. Philips did not have the money to pay and the Imam said, “No money, no payment for those Yemeni laborers, no taking the things out. Pay, and he can come in and take them out.” Eventually Philips got from the Scaif Foundation the dollars to enable him to buy the necessary number of Maria Theresa dollars.

Then we had a further period during which Philips and others contended that the money had been paid but still the Imam wouldn't allow the equipment to be removed. In fact, I had never received the money. It took time to straighten that out. I pointed out to Washington that I had never received any money from Philips or from the Scaif people or from anybody else. I'd been awaiting it, but hadn't received it. Apparently Philips had spent the money on something else. In due course he got some more money from Scaif but this time they sent it to me, as Consul in Aden, directly. I remember converting it into Maria Theresa dollars, loading them on a jeep, driving up to Taiz and paying the Yemeni government the Maria Theresa dollars. With that the Imam said Philips' people could take the stuff out. When I passed that on to the one remaining Philips representative in Aden—a mechanic, a very nice fellow—he said, “I won't go in there alone because they'll kill me.” So I got permission from the Imam to go to Marib with him as a kind of protection. We went to Marib, by road

through the West Aden Protectorate. When we got to Marib, to my horror this “hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of valuable archeological equipment” turned out to be a couple of tires, a couple of shovels, a huge Coca Cola vending machine, which couldn't operate in Yemen under any circumstances, numerous cases of Coca Cola syrup, and numerous cases of paper cups for Coca Cola. That was the hundreds of thousands of dollars which Philips had claimed he had had to leave behind. Eventually we either sold the equipment that was left there, including the Coca Cola machine which the Amil of Marib bought for reasons that have never been clear to me, or took out the unsold stuff. That, however, was an issue—the Wendell Philips case—which, I think, was the major part of US-Yemeni relations for the better part of a year and a half.

Q: Well, this certainly well illustrates the difficulties that a Consul can have in a small post because of the activities of one or very few American citizens. After your assignment in Aden you were transferred, I think, directly to Baghdad as Chief of the Political Section, and this was in 1954-early in 1954—and at that time the government in Baghdad was, I think one could say, fairly pro-western, and it was dominated, although possibly he was not in it at the time, by Nuri Said. I wonder if you would comment about working in that environment, and in particular your view of Nuri and then the genesis of the what became the Baghdad Pact, the CENTO organization?

EILTS: Yes. I arrived in Baghdad in April of 1954. At the time Nuri was not Prime Minister, but a man by the name of Fahd Jamali had that post. Jamali was a very distinguished Iraqi; he was a Shia; he was a Columbia University graduate; he had been a Minister in various cabinets; and now, a short time before I arrived, he had been appointed as Prime Minister. Now, what was of particular interest, as far as the United States was concerned, was that our Charge—we did not have an Ambassador at the time, the Ambassador had left on transfer a week after I arrived—went around telling everyone that he had arranged to have Jamali appointed as Prime Minister. Implicit in this rather foolish and empty claim was that the US had done so. The US Charge was a man named Phillip Ireland. This was an effort to show up the British, who had been the principal element in Iraq up to that

time and had often been responsible for suggesting who Prime Ministers might be. Well, Jamali didn't last long as Prime Minister. He really did not have the kind of political base that was necessary and by the latter part of the fall of '54 Nuri Said Pasha did come back. Nuri came back, in what I think was his tenth or eleventh term as Prime Minister. Most of the members of his cabinet were people from the old school, colleagues of his. It was like shuffling a pack of cards. Nuri was a little man, as far as size was concerned, but he was a man of considerable political acumen. He was very close to the British, and had for many years depended on the British.

But this was also a period when Iraq felt it needed additional arms and the United States was willing, as it turned out in early talks with Nuri Said Pasha, to provide arms to Iraq. These would supplement arms provided by the British.

Q: Excuse me. I wonder could you explain why perhaps the Iraqis felt at this time that they needed more arms?

EILTS: It was shortly after—well, six years after, not that shortly after—the Arab-Israeli war. The government of Iraq felt that it was exposed to a threat, not just a potential threat from Israel, but from others. As a matter of fact, Nuri Said wasn't that concerned about a real threat from Israel. But Nuri Said had come to be concerned about a possible threat from the Soviet Union, because it was, after all, the period of the cold war. And, while the British had provided the Iraqi government with weaponry up until now, the judgement of Nuri Said and the Iraqi Chief of State was that Iraq needed more arms. The military sector of society in Iraq was important and there was an effort to keep it happy. The British could no longer provide all the needed weapons and the United States seemed willing to, if Iraq was prepared to take some kind of steps to set up, or to participate in a security organization that would be directed against a putative Soviet threat. The earlier so-called MEDO, Middle East Defense Organization, effort had been attempted. The British had spearheaded that several years before and it had failed. We then, the United States, and particularly John Foster Dulles when he became Secretary of State, developed the

so-called Northern Tier Concept. The states on the southern border of the Soviet Union —or claim to it—Turkey, Iraq (even though Iraq is not contiguous to the Soviet Border) Iran, Pakistan, and possibly Afghanistan. When a new American Ambassador, Waldemar Gallman, was appointed to Baghdad in the latter part of '54, Dulles charged him with trying to persuade the Iraqi government to participate in a Northern Tier. The lubricant would be military assistance. Now I must say that few of us at the time all of this started, i.e., in the fall of '54, thought there was much chance of persuading the Iraqi government to do anything about it for some time to come.

But the persuasive element, the element that came into play and persuaded Nuri Said Pasha to go along with this kind of thing, that is with a Northern Tier organization, was the Turkish leadership. Specifically Adnan Menderes who was Prime Minister of Turkey, and his Foreign Minister Zorlu. They visited Baghdad in January of '55 and persuaded Nuri to sign an Iraqi-Turkish Pact, a pact of mutual defense. It represented a very limited mutual commitment, but was nevertheless a mutual defense part. This then became the basis for what subsequently came to be called the Baghdad Pact, after the British government had joined it, and the Pakistani government and the Iranian government had also acceded to it. The first meeting of that organization was held in November of '55 in Baghdad, at which time it was decided to call the organization the Baghdad Pact, and to set up the secretariat for the organization in Baghdad.

Now, as I've said, the lubricating element in all of this was the United States. It was the promise of American military assistance. We had used argumentation with the Iraqis, which the Turks copied, in trying to win over Nuri Pasha. We and then the Turkish leaders stressed to Nuri that the degree of Iraqi participation in a regional defense organization would determine the volume of military aid that might be received from the United States. Hence, the desire on the part of the Iraqi government to join up. There's a letter that was attached to the Iraqi instrument of ratification of the Turkish-Iraqi Treaty that says that as far as the Arab-Israeli problem is concerned, the Iraqi position hasn't changed. This was

an effort to try to keep themselves clean vis-a-vis the Arabs. But that is how that came about.

Now it came about, the birth of the Baghdad Pact, much more quickly than any of us had ever believed. It was suddenly upon us. And when it was suddenly upon us, all of the forces in the Department of State, in the US Government, that had been skeptical about the wisdom of a Middle East regional defense organization, now came into play. There were those that said if the United States joins the Baghdad Pact, it will antagonize Nasser, who was of course very strongly anti-Nuri and anti-Israel. Others said it will require a security commitment to Israel. At one point the Israel government even asked for permission, at least the Israeli Ambassador did so, to explore the possibility of joining the Baghdad Pact. Well, that wasn't feasible. But then a separate security agreement with Israel would be needed, it was argued, if there was to be any chance of getting Senate advice and consent for joining such a treaty. That wasn't wanted by the administration at the time.

Another group said the Greeks will be upset because it would mean the US was siding with the Turks against the Greeks. Another group, especially Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, who was Ambassador in India at the time, said, “The Indians will be upset if you do this,” because of Pakistani membership. So the United States, despite the fact that it was the principal catalytic element in the organization of the Baghdad Pact, when push came to shove, the most it was able to do was accept observer status. Now the fact that it was only an observer did not mean that much—its voice in Baghdad Pact councils was the preeminent one, but we never became formal members of it and much of my time in Baghdad as head of the Political Section was spent on this issue of the Baghdad Pact. In the early days of the Pact, first the Turkish-Iraqi Agreement and then the Pact itself, and in the initial meetings that took place in Baghdad—the US Ambassador was the US observer to the Council of Deputies meetings. I accompanied him and also attended the various ministerial meetings of the Baghdad Pact that occurred every six months.

Q: Well now, some have argued on an ex post facto basis that Nuri's step in joining the Turkey-Iraqi Pact and then the Baghdad Pact served to alienate Iraq even further from the mainstream of Arab opinion and, as a result, was a factor in the eventual overthrow of this pro-Western regime in 1958 I believe it was - '57...

EILTS: '58.

Q: Would you care to comment on that?

EILTS: My own view is that certainly the Iraqi membership in the Baghdad Pact was a factor in what led to the '58 overthrow of the monarchy. It wasn't the only factor, but it was a factor. Iraq had isolated itself. But I think the primary problems that one ought to think about in connection with that are these: should one have done more after the Pact was initially formed to persuade the Syrian government to join, and it was not a unified government at the time, on the issue of Pact membership? Or to persuade the Jordanian government to adhere? Related to that, if the job of urging those governments to do so had not been left so much to the British, who were suspect, and had been handled by the US, might the results have been different? If another Arab state had joined the Baghdad Pact on the same conditions that Iraq did, that is keeping its hands clean on the Arab-Israeli problem, that would certainly have helped. But none of this happened.

Second, the rather ambivalent action on the part of the United States left members puzzled and hamstrung the Pact from the outset. After having been what I've said is the principal catalytic element in all of this before the Pact was signed, the US suddenly decided that it didn't want to be a member. This was puzzling to everybody and it certainly didn't help Nuri. Yes, he got some of the US military equipment that he sought, but even then he did not get what he had expected. I think we dissembled a bit on that one. We led him to believe that if he joined the Pact he would get additional increments of military assistance over and above what Iraq was already receiving. There was no money for additional increments. In effect, he got what he would have gotten anyway. So the

United States did not join the Pact, it was simply an observer, and, yes, American military assistance was indeed arriving, but not in the amounts that Iraq had expected.

I think all of those things hurt Nuri's position. But I would still argue that the principal thing that hurt Nuri was his lifelong association with the British. The British were, of course, still preeminent in the Gulf at that time.

Now when the coup happened in '58, it was argued at the time that if the British government had responded positively to a request that Nuri made of it that Kuwait, which Iraq had always claimed as part of the Basra province of the Ottoman empire period, be returned to Iraq, this might have saved the Iraqi monarchy. Kuwait had not yet been declared independent, it was still a British protectorate, hence Iraq contended Kuwait could and should be given back. The argument that one heard was if that had happened Nuri Pasha would have been such a hero in the eyes of the Iraqis and that all of these other things for which he was being blamed, the alienation from the Arabs and everything else, he would have been able to weather. All of this is of course speculation, but I mention it at some length mainly to suggest that it wasn't just the joining of the Baghdad Pact on the part of Nuri. There were other factors in his downfall.

Q: Well, thank you. That's a very good explanation of that period of your career. Do you have any other comments about personalities or operations in Baghdad before...

EILTS: Well, Nuri I think as I look back on Nuri—it is argued that Nuri was a British agent. Nuri Said Pasha was one of the most brilliant, articulate Arab statesmen that I have ever met and over the years I have met a great many. He was no fool. He had a sense of pragmatism, a sense of realism about him. He was not deluded by the normal Arab rhetorical symbols. Perhaps it was because of his Kurdish mother that he saw things in a more realistic fashion. I think he was a tremendously able statesman who unfortunately lived in a period when the generation of Arab nationalists to which he belonged, the first generation—the World War I generation and post-World War I generation—had already

become passe. A new generation of Arab nationalists had by then emerged, who saw Arab nationalism in a somewhat different context, led largely by that very charismatic figure, Gamal Abdul Nasser. The Israeli problem had arisen, the Arab-Israeli conflict was underway. And so Nuri had passed his prime. It was in a sense perhaps a mistake that he should have assumed the Prime Ministry again in those years. And yet there was no other Iraqi around who had the administrative ability and the leadership ability that Nuri had. Nuri was indeed a leader. Whatever one says of him, Nuri was an exceptionally strong leader.

Q: Thank you. Ambassador Eilts, after leaving Baghdad you went back to the Department and served as officer-in-charge of CENTO affairs from 1957, I think, to 1960. Because of that particular organization's role, its periodic meetings and so on and the fact that you served as sort of the Executive Secretary, I guess, of the US delegation, you were brought into perhaps closer contact with Secretary of State Dulles personally than any other officer of your grade in the Service. I wonder if you could perhaps comment from your vantage point on your views of Secretary Dulles as Secretary of State?

EILTS: Yes, I'd be happy to do so. But let me just, by way of introduction, explain how this came about. Secretary Dulles, given his own interests in regional defense organizations, among them the Baghdad Pact—even though, as I've said, we didn't join when it came into being—had decided he wanted a series of personal advisers to him on the several regional security pacts. One of them was the Baghdad Pact, and since the Baghdad Pact had Pakistan in it and Pakistan was also in SEATO, that particular adviser's office was called the Baghdad Pact-SEATO Desk. A very senior officer, Bob Memminger, whom you may remember, had been named to that job. I was brought in, after leaving Baghdad in the fall of 1956, as his number two. And for a period of three or four months I served as number two in that office. Then Memminger was transferred, there was the question of a successor for the position of Baghdad Pact-SEATO adviser. By that time apparently the powers-that-be in the Department of State had concluded that most of the work connected with the Baghdad Pact was being done by me. Hence, instead of naming a more senior person to replace Memminger I was put into Memminger's job. That then brought me into

contact with the Secretary of State, which is something that I would not have expected at this stage.

Now you have to remember that I came into this kind of a position as a relatively junior officer and John Foster Dulles was a very formidable figure. I did have considerable contact with him on matters having to do with the Pact. Not, incidentally, initially, because for a period of maybe six-seven months after I returned to the States—that would have been in late '56 and early '57—Dulles never attended a Baghdad Pact meeting. He attended NATO meetings, SEATO meetings, but never a Baghdad Pact one—we were not after all a member, only an observer. We always sent Loy Henderson, the Deputy Under Secretary at the time. Loy Henderson was an extraordinarily able man. But each time the Foreign Ministers and Prime Ministers of the member states convened, they would complain, “Why don't you have a higher ranking representative?” The Baghdad Pact after all depended upon US support. Without this it could not survive.

Dulles decided that he was going to go to a Baghdad Pact meeting, for the first time, when the Ministerial Council meeting was held in Ankara. That would have been in '58. It was in connection with that trip that I really got to know Mr. Dulles very well and worked with him.

I had to do all of the papers, nobody else had much interest in the Baghdad Pact. There were still the attitudes that I referred to before that remained generally prevalent in the Department of State. The Secretary flew on the President's plane—what was it called, the Sacred Cow? He took a small group of ten people on the plane with him, not the large number that jets could later accommodate. On the long flight to Ankara the Secretary had to be briefed on all kinds of things. I remember writing—I was asked to write the speech he was to make at the Ankara session. And I wrote it and one of the Assistant Secretaries, Bill Rountree, came back to where I was sitting and said to me, “The Secretary likes it very much.” I was pleased and gratified. About 20 minutes later, I suddenly received a draft and it was my speech all torn up, all changed. I must say I was very upset, I was upset partly because I thought, “Well, they were just being nice saying they liked the speech,

and in fact they didn't.” I still had that degree of sensitivity as a young officer about the perfections of my drafts! A few minutes later—I guess I must have expressed my concern to Bill Rountree or to somebody, all aboard the plane were all so much senior to me—Dulles came back to where I was sitting and said, “I understand that you're upset about my making some changes in the speech. I want you to know that I liked your speech, but I have never given a speech that I have not changed at least a dozen times between the original draft and the time I deliver it.” He said, “I want you to look at this, I want you to give me your comments.” The other eight or nine delegation members were asked to do the same thing. And I discovered as we flew, on that 20-25 hour trip, stopping at various places for fuel, that I was a member of this very senior group even though I was the low, low man on the totem pole, whose views were carefully considered and indeed sought. This was, of course, because none of the others knew much about the Baghdad Pact. My suggestions, including things not to put into the speech and things to put in, tended generally to be accepted. It was an interesting experience.

In all of this Dulles was correct, friendly in the sense that I've indicated, but never very, very warm. Well, we got through the Ankara meeting very successfully, and came back by way of Bermuda—Dulles wanted to spend a day in Bermuda. When we arrived in Washington, it was a very snowy day. We landed at Andrews Air Force Base, and Dulles' limousine was there waiting to take the Secretary and Mrs. Dulles home. He and his wife got in the limousine while the rest of us, the small group who had accompanied him, picked up our bags and looked for cabs. I remember walking in the snow right outside the Air Force headquarters building when Dulles' limousine drove out to get into the main road and passed me. It was already dark, but I suppose the lights picked me up. After his limousine had passed me, it stopped. A minute later out of the limousine into the snow came Secretary Dulles. He walked back towards me and said, “I want to thank you for everything that you've done to make this trip a success.” That was it, but I must say I was very touched by this. Two months later I found myself on the special promotion list.

From that point on, in connection with the Baghdad Pact, I saw a great deal of him. When the Abd al-Karim Qasim coup took place in July of '58, it coincided with a scheduled Baghdad Pact Ministerial meeting in London. Dulles went to that meeting, which was held in deep gloom. It was at that meeting (the Iraqis couldn't show up, they were dead), that the remaining member states again put pressure on the US to join the Pact. Unless it did so, they contended the Baghdad Pact would collapse. Despite the alarming situation, Dulles did not want to join the Baghdad Pact for the same reasons that I've indicated before. Instead, however, he developed the idea, “Why don't we sign a series of bilateral agreements of cooperation with the member states?” Britain was excluded, it didn't need such a bilateral agreement. Turkey didn't really need it, but Iran and Pakistan did. Hence, Dulles made a statement at the end of the session that the United States would within three months present to the three regional member states a draft agreement of cooperation, which would be the equivalent of US membership in the Pact.

The job of drafting that agreement was given to me. It took much more than three months for the negotiations to progress. In fact, it took six months. The bilateral agreements of cooperation that we have with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, signed in 1959, were the result of this. In the course of (a) drawing up this draft agreement of cooperation and (b) backstopping the negotiations from the Washington side, almost everything had to be checked out with Dulles personally because he did not want to go beyond existing legislation in terms of the substance of the proposed agreement. He did not want to put anything into it that would be new that might require it to be an actual treaty, subject to Senate advice and consent. So he watched the negotiations, in his typical lawyer's fashion, very, very closely. I guess I saw him almost every other day for five minutes or ten minutes or more to discuss progress and problems that had arisen. That's the context in which I knew him. I developed a tremendous respect for him, indeed even a personal regard for him. In terms of his dealings with the Baghdad Pact member states, when he got into the issue, he did very well indeed. He always showed that lawyerly instinct, an attorney's approach rather than the imaginative Kissinger kind of social scientist approach.

As far as I personally was concerned, from a career point of view, although I obviously didn't realize this until long afterward, from a career point of view, it was a very positive experience.

Q: This was, I think, in the period 1958-1959 and I believe I'm right in thinking that it was just about at this time that Secretary Dulles began to develop the signs of the cancer that led to his resignation. I don't want to pin you down but did you get any sense that his powers were fading in this period?

EILTS: I did not get any sense that his mental powers were fading. He was as mentally perceptive as the very first time I saw him. I didn't see enough of him to know whether, for example, he had to take more medication, or whether his walk, his gait, had been affected by his ailment. But his mental powers, no, there was no evidence that they were adversely affected.

Q: Well, after this assignment you...

EILTS: Excuse me. There's one more element that should be mentioned. It doesn't have anything to do with Dulles though. We were pressed shortly before Dulles' death to have a Baghdad Pact ministerial meeting in Washington, which we had always wanted to avoid. It was Dulles, as one of his last acts, who had approved it. It was scheduled six months ahead of time. By the time it convened, Dulles was dead and Herter had been named Secretary of State.

It was my job as Baghdad Pact officer to arrange the meeting. The business of arranging a conference in Washington was a major headache because—yes, we had had NATO conferences, OAS conferences and so on in Washington, but all of those organizations had rather extensive staffs in the Department of State who could write the necessary substantive papers. I was the only one who could do this for the Baghdad Pact. All of the papers, all of the arrangements, the meetings were held at Constitution Hall, the various places where bilateral sessions were held, where the people would stay, etc. was left to

me. It was murder. Eisenhower was to speak at the opening session, but Eisenhower became ill at that time. So Richard Nixon took over, as Vice President, at the opening session. He used the speech that I had written for Eisenhower. Somehow, in the person of Nixon, the speech didn't come across as well as I thought it would have come over if given by Eisenhower. Perhaps it was the speech. But that was the first time we had the Pact meeting, a ministerial meeting, in Washington. It was regarded as a rather major development, but it went remarkably successfully so everybody was pleased, including most of all myself.

Q: That must have been a terrible headache. Now we turn next to your next assignment. You moved sort of laterally, as I recall. Remaining in the Department, you became officer-in-charge of Arabian Peninsula affairs in February-March 1960, so that you were then back on an area where you had served. Without going into great detail, perhaps, is there something that sticks in your mind about that period of service, operating in that office?

EILTS: I did come back into NE and it was because of my previous service in Saudi Arabia and in Aden and in Yemen. But I guess I ought to add that shortly after I took over the Arabian desk job, I was also asked to take on the job of Near Eastern Regional Affairs, which had to do particularly with Palestinian refugees. You remember the late Jim Ludlow, who had formerly had the job. Then Under Secretary Douglas Dillon was dissatisfied with the way Palestine affairs were being handled and insisted on a management change. As a result, the NE Regional Affairs responsibility was assigned to me along with Arabian Peninsula affairs.

On the Arabian Peninsula assignment I guess the most interesting and in a sense the most frustrating came with the Kennedy administration, which had a confused policy on Saudi Arabia. There were two conflicting themes that existed. One, in the person of Under Secretary Chester Bowles, who may have been a very, very fine person but was also the most god-awful administrator that I have ever seen, who thought that the Saudi government was a feudal monarchy in the worst possible sense. He simply would not

approve any policy paper that went up. It would get stuck in his box. I remember on four or five occasions being personally called by Secretary Rusk, who had given instructions through channels for something to be done on Saudi Arabia or whatever it might be. They were not necessarily major things. “Where is the paper that I asked for?” he would angrily ask. Invariably it had been sent up, through channels, anywhere from two to three weeks before, but when it got to Bowles it had gotten stuck. He had not done anything about it; he hadn't liked it; but he hadn't said no and he hadn't said yes. So it just got stuck there.

And Rusk would then say, “Well, send me a copy.” So we started going around Bowles. Bowles was regularly negative with respect to Saudi Arabia. “These fellows can't drink their oil,” was the kind of comment that he used to make.

The other side of the coin was Kennedy himself. I don't think Kennedy knew very much about Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Kennedy was one of those who argued that greater democracy should be established in various Middle Eastern states—Saudi Arabia was one. But somehow the Saudi Ambassador in Washington was able from time to time to influence him. On one occasion the Saudi Ambassador came to Kennedy and complained that it was taking six, seven, eight months and even longer to get some aircraft, some fighter aircraft that we had promised to sell to the Saudis. Kennedy took this to heart and decided to do something about it. And his way of doing so was, instead of calling either the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of State, who were after all Cabinet members, to call me as the Desk Officer and demand to know, “Why is it taking so long to deliver those aircraft?” As though I, as Saudi Arabia Desk Officer, had anything to do with the speed of facilitating the aircraft delivery. And when I explained that it was a matter for the Pentagon, the President's instructions to me were, “Well, go and see McNamara and tell him to get those airplanes to Saudi Arabia right away.” It was a very unorthodox way of operating.

On the one hand, Bowles, as I say, clamped down on everything having to do with Saudi Arabia. The President, on the other hand, asked the desk officer to do something about it. When Rusk heard about these direct presidential calls, he was upset because of the

channels that were used. I went over to the Pentagon and tried to tell people there (I could not see McNamara) “The President has called me to say the aircraft should be delivered immediately.” Not surprisingly they wouldn't believe me. I must say if I had been they, I wouldn't have believed what I was saying to them either. Eventually those planes, thanks to Kennedy's intervention, were delivered. This was not because of me, I obviously couldn't get the Pentagon to hurry, but I had had to report to the President and give Pentagon reaction. I did that and he arranged with McNamara for the shipment to be expedited.

Q: That's an interesting contrast.

EILTS: Incidentally, on the other side of the coin, the regional affairs big job then was the Arab refugees. The big issue at that time was that Congress was getting fed up with the US providing money each year for UNRWA, the organization for the welfare of the refugees. We were providing $23 million a year, year after year after year. “No light at the end of the tunnel” was the statement made constantly by the Congress. Well, what to do about it? There was no way of solving the Palestinian refugee problem. But we managed to cut a deal with the Congress and I pride myself on doing so. Congress said, “Why don't you take some of the PL 480, Public Law 480 grain—wheat and wheat flour—and use that as part of the US contribution to UNRWA?” We also had large quantities in Egyptian pounds. “Why don't you use some Egyptian pounds for Gaza—the refugees in Gaza?” the Congress asked. With considerable difficulty I managed to get from the Department of Agriculture a PL 480 wheat allocation as part of our contribution and also the Egyptians finally agreed to allow a certain number of US owned Egyptian pounds to be used for our UNRWA contribution.

Now the fact that we were (a) using grain, some of the grain that Congress wanted to get rid of, and (b) Egypt suddenly changed its attitude and allowed Egyptian pounds to be used, made it possible to up our contribution to UNRWA from $23 million a year to $31 million a year, including grain. And it continued so for a long time there.

The second element was that we worked very hard to try to correct abuses that were involved with ration cards, Palestinian ration cards, rectification of UNRWA rolls, we called it. A lot of Palestinian refugees had died, their cards had simply been turned over to others and so it was clear that there was a tremendous abuse of this whole UNRWA ration cards. Those who were contributing, like the US, were the ones who were being snookered. But with an effort to rectify rolls the Congress was pleased that this was happening. We warned the Congress, however, that true rectification would mean not only eliminating all of those who were dead, or who had sold their ration cards, but also it would mean adding new children who had been born. At the time that wasn't being done. The total number of people eligible for UNRWA rations would be higher and in fact it was. When they discovered that, the Congress stopped it's complaints about the refugee issue.

Q: After your period in the Department, which ended I guess in 1961, you had a year at the National War College and then you were assigned to London and I think you told me that in the first part of your assignment, which was to the Near Eastern desk in London, you spent a lot of time working on Yemen again. How did that happen?

EILTS: About a month after I arrived in London (I arrived in London in August of '62), i.e. in September of '62 the Imam Ahmad died. His son, Muhammad al-Badr, took over. About three weeks later there was a revolution conducted by Yemen military officers against him. The palace in Sanaa, where he was staying, was shot up, and it was believed he was dead. It turned out that he managed to escape into northern Yemen, and he reappeared with the Zaidi tribes of that area. Very quickly, out of this developed a Yemeni civil war between Yemeni republicans and royalists. The royalists were those who continued to support the Imam Badr, the republicans were the army officers who conducted the coup.

The Egyptians supported the republicans, the Saudis supported the royalists. It was a period when Nasser was still describing Arab monarchs generally as reactionaries. So the Saudis took very seriously, not only the revolution that overthrew the monarchy in Yemen, but the fact that it should be supported by Nasser. Within six months after the civil war

began, the United States recognized the Yemeni Arab Republic. The British government continued to recognize the royalists. So in my job, as a Middle East officer in London, I was caught in the middle with the British acting to support the royalists, perhaps not so much officially, although certain members of Parliament were very active in urging support for the royalists and pressing us not to go too far with the republicans because they didn't occupy most of the country. If the Egyptians pulled out, the British contended, the whole thing would collapse. And we taking the position that the Imam Badr was something archaic who should have been gotten rid of, and that there was indeed much more support for a Republic. The British and we were on different wickets and it affected our and their views on Egypt. They, of course, had had problems with Nasser before, and it affected their and our views on Saudi Arabia. So we had the question of being on opposite sides at a time when we were in general trying to get some kind of harmonization of British policy and American policy toward the Middle East, something that had already been disrupted in the '56 war, the Arab-Israeli war, and had then improved somewhat. Now again, e.g. this issue of the role of the Egyptians in Yemen and the Yemeni civil war that harmony had been disrupted. That was the principal issue.

Now I must say this. The British were much smarter than we were, not on the issue I'm talking about but on their operational method. The British would always involve their man in Washington, my opposite number, and first give him whatever information, whatever they wanted him to say to the Department of State. They knew that in order to get information you have to give information. And only afterwards when I, from the American Embassy, came would they speak to me about it. They always used their man first. This was not a question of lack of confidence in me because they asked me all kinds of things. I knew more about Yemen and more about Saudi Arabia than most of them. Factual questions of all sorts were constantly put to me by the British, but the method of using their officers was always using their man in Washington first and only then confiding in me. And we, we never did it that way. We never did put our man out in front, we somehow didn't

seem to realize, or at least place that much weight on the idea, that to get information you have to give it.

Q: That's a very good point and I certainly agree. Then after the Yemen thing subsided I believe you said that your second preoccupation turned out to be Cyprus. How did that...

EILTS: The Yemeni thing never really subsided. When I went subsequently as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, the Yemen problem was still underway. But by that time the British had become accustomed to our views and we had become accustomed to theirs. But then Cyprus came up. Cyprus came up a few days before Christmas in 1963 when the Archbishop Makarios, who was the president of Cyprus, unilaterally abolished the Turkish provincial councils, which had been established under the Cypriot constitution. The Turks were upset about this unilateral Greek Cypriot violation of the constitution. The Cyprus problem was handled in the British government not by the Foreign Office but by the Commonwealth Relations Office. Later the two were combined, but at the time they were separate. The Commonwealth Relations Office had nobody in Washington. It didn't trust the British Embassy in Washington. Therefore the officer in the American Embassy, who was handling Middle East affairs, became the point of contact with the Americans on the Cyprus issue. It turned out to be a rather nasty affair. When the British found that they were unable to persuade Archbishop Makarios to do anything about this whole situation, i.e. to revert to the original constitutional arrangement, the United States got into it for no good reason other than that we were concerned that the Turks and the Greeks, both members of NATO, might get to slugging it out if this extra-NATO wasn't resolved. So we decided to get into it.

President Johnson first sent out George Ball, who was Under Secretary at the time. He came through London, so I was the man detailed for that mission and went out and we talked—we all talked to—the leaders of Turkey, Cyprus, and Greece. But as a matter of fact, Ball was authorized by the Prime Minister of England—at the time Lord Hume—to speak not only for the American government but also for the British government. The

only thing that Hume seems to have forgotten was to tell his Minister for Commonwealth Relations, Duncan Sandys, about this. So when the latter received messages that George Ball was speaking for the British government, he blew his stack, as you might imagine. Well, Ball's mission didn't succeed but it did mean the US was involved. Some four or five months later, maybe slightly less, Dean Acheson was sent out to visit Greece, Turkey and Cyprus and again I was involved in that issue.

So that's how that came about, my involvement of the Cyprus dispute, the US involvement flowed from concern over the negative effect of a continuation of the Greek-Turkish dispute on the southeastern flank of NATO.

Q: Well, you were closely associated then with two very distinguished American leaders in international affairs. I wonder if you have any personal thoughts as to their operating styles, that is, Secretary Acheson or Secretary Ball?

EILTS: Ball was an official of the US Government. I had seen Ball from time to time before, but had never worked very closely with him. I became tremendously impressed with Ball's operating style. He had a way of operating. He could articulate his ideas well. No matter how depressing the responses we received might be, he always kept up his optimism. He was a tremendous leader. It always interested me that in dealing with leaders, be it the Prime Minister of Britain alone, or Duncan Sandys, the very tough Minister of Commonwealth Relations, or whoever it might be; Makarios; the Turkish leadership; the Greek leadership, Ball dominated the conversation but he didn't dominate it by bluster. He is a large man, of course, a broad man—broad shouldered—he just dominated the whole proceedings by his way of putting things; by his method of argument; by his ability and willingness to understand the others' point of view; and by his ability as a good lawyer—he too has a legal background—to try to find ways and means of reconciling the positions of the different parties. I developed a great admiration for George Ball. He was a real statesman.

Dean Acheson was already out of office. He had been Secretary of State. I had seen him, I guess, occasionally, but I could hardly claim to have worked with him. I thought Acheson, by the time he was on this Cyprus mission, was past his prime. I guess he had been called in as an elder statesman and one who had had something to do with the organization of NATO. But when I compare the two missions, the Ball mission and the Acheson mission, Acheson's doesn't stand out as having been as effective. Now, in fairness though, Acheson got from Papandreou senior, the then Prime Minister of Greece, the father of the present Prime Minister, a commitment that the Greek government would agree to something called taksim, that is, a division of Cyprus between Greece and Turkey. Where you divided it had to be worked out, but a division was agreed on. This is what the Turks had always wanted. The Greeks had always wanted enosis...the inclusion of the entire island in Greece. But the following day, by which time he'd gone to Geneva, young Papandreou, the present Prime Minister, showed up in Geneva and had obviously persuaded his father the previous evening to ditch the taksim. And young Papandreou informed Acheson and the American party that there could be no taksim. So the Acheson mission was a failure. It came closer to a settlement in the context of the senior Papandreou's agreement, the taksim, for a brief period at least, than Ball's mission did. But in terms of the conduct of the mission, Ball was far more impressive. Acheson projected a certain degree of arrogance. His method of speech was clipped. It didn't go over well with the Turkish, and the Greek, and the Cypriot leaders. Ball, although he told them some very, very tough things, put it across in a fashion where, even when they were unhappy about what Ball said, they liked him.

Q: That's a very interesting contrast. I think your Ambassador there in London at that time was Bruce. Is that right?

EILTS: David Bruce.

Q: Do you have any comments on him as a Chief of Mission? He was a non-career man but with extensive experience.

EILTS: Oh, David Bruce, I think, is one of the outstanding persons for whom I've ever worked. He had a sense of balance. He was interested in everything that went on in the Embassy. He delegated authority, but at the same time when you needed the Ambassador's help on anything, you could go to him and he would immediately respond.

Q: After this assignment in London, you had a brief tour in Tripoli as Deputy Chief of Mission and then you were assigned at a relatively early age as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia in the fall of 1965. Did that come as a surprise? How did that eventuate?

EILTS: Yes, it came as a surprise. When I was named to Libya a year earlier, as you mentioned, I didn't want to go to Libya. I had wanted to go from London to our embassy in Tel Aviv as Deputy Chief of Mission. The Near Eastern Bureau had endorsed this, but the administrative people in the Department had someone else in mind for that DCM-ship in Tel Aviv. Just before I was to leave London, the man who was to go as DCM to Tel Aviv was given an Embassy in Africa and the Tel Aviv post opened, was vacated, and I was named to it. I was delighted. It was Governor Harriman, however, who was Under Secretary at the time, who broke my Tel Aviv assignment and insisted that I go to Tripoli. He did so because we were having problems with the Wheelus Air Force Base negotiations, and he wanted me to get involved. This was the result of our mutual friend Dave Newsom, who headed African affairs at that time.

I was very unhappy when I left London in order to go to Tripoli, very unhappy. And I remember expressing to David Bruce my unhappiness. He said, “Don't worry about it, you won't be there more than a year.” I, of course, thought he was only being felicitous.

About a year after I had arrived in Tripoli, David Newsom was named Ambassador to Libya and there was clearly no longer any need for me to be there. At that particular time

I received a message from the State Department, from the Director General, saying that President Johnson wanted me to go as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. I was asked, if offered the job, would I accept it. I subsequently discovered that there were three elements in the Department that had pushed this assignment. One was the NEA Bureau, which wanted me to go there. Another was George Ball with whom I had worked on the Cyprus thing; and the third was David Bruce. They had all, apparently around the time that I left London to go to Tripoli, proposed to the White House that I be named Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Although when the post became vacant, William Porter was named. Porter was very quickly moved—he never went to Saudi Arabia—he became Deputy Ambassador in Vietnam, where Henry Cabot Lodge wanted him. The position therefore again became vacant and all of these three recommendations then came together. As a result, I was named Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

Q: Ambassador Eilts, in your mission to Saudi Arabia what was your primary aim?

EILTS: Well, I suppose the primary aim was to continue the close relationships that the United States and Saudi Arabia had enjoyed for a long period of time. The issue had become a bit complicated because of differences between the United States Government, the Kennedy administration and subsequently the Johnson administration, and the Saudi Arabian government, and particularly King Faisal, over the issue of Yemen. As we discussed earlier, the United States had recognized the Yemen Arab Republic. The Saudi government strongly supported the Yemeni royalists, and we were trying to persuade the Saudis to cool it a bit in order to help negotiate a settlement of the kind that we felt was desirable; i.e., some kind of acceptance by the Saudis of the Yemen Arab Republic. The Saudis would have none of it for reasons of their own. We clearly had a divergence of interests on this whole issue of Yemen.

The problem was, given the very deep Saudi feelings on the Yemeni issue, which were far deeper than anything we had in the United States, and the fact that we had these divergent outlooks, keeping our relationship sufficiently close so that a dialogue could

continue on trying to find some mutual accommodation on the Yemen issue. That was the primary mission in that early period.

When I arrived in Jeddah—I remember arriving on a Thursday, the following day was Friday, the Moslem Sabbath—I had assumed that since it was also the month of Ramadan at the time, that I would not have to present my credentials to the King for a week or ten days. Well, as it turned out, I received word on Friday that the King wanted me to come the following day and present credentials, which I then did. But the credentials presentation ceremony was very, very short indeed because the King wanted to sit and talk about Yemen. He pulled me aside right afterward, took me into his office, and for two hours talked about Yemen and what he felt was the shortsightedness of the American position on Yemen. He obviously had some of the same worries that I did, that the friendship between the two nations was threatened by this very significant difference over Yemen. By that time the American mediation mission, headed by Ellsworth Bunker, had for a period of time thought it had had a success. The Egyptians and the Saudis had agreed to have the conference at Haradh in Yemen and to try to resolve the issue through negotiation. Each was, of course, pushing its particular set of Yemeni clients...

Q: Excuse me. You're speaking of approximately November 1965.

EILTS: Each was pushing its respective clients; the Egyptians, the Republicans in Yemen, the Saudis, the Royalists. These two parties, theoretically at least were to sit down and work out a mutual accommodation. By the time I arrived in Saudi Arabia, Faisal had come to the conclusion that President Nasser of Egypt had reneged on that arrangement. Instead of carrying through the promises, additional Egyptian troops had been sent into Yemen and the Egyptians showed no signs, at least as Faisal saw it, of wanting to convene the Haradh conference. So the Bunker mediation idea, which the United States Government had catalyzed and supported, seemed to be falling apart. “Where do we go now” was the issue that was very much on Faisal's mind.

Q: Leaving aside the Yemen issue, in the period that you were in Saudi Arabia, how would you view the Saudi role in area affairs? Did they play really a very major or significant role?

EILTS: There are two answers to that question. In terms of the Arab-Israeli problem, the Saudi role was minimal. The Saudis supported the Palestinians, they supported the Arab cause, but prior to the June '67 war it was Nasser and Egypt who were in the van on the Arab side of the Arab-Israeli problem. As a matter of fact, Faisal and the Saudis, along with other principalities in the Gulf region, continued to be severely criticized by Nasser as reactionaries. Nevertheless, they certainly supported the Arab cause. In another sense, and largely as a reaction not to Israel, but to Nasser, the Saudi role in regional affairs was much more prominent. In order to counter the Nasser criticisms of Saudi Arabia presumably being reactionary, Faisal in effect organized what he called Islamic Unity, not Pact as some have called it, but an Islamic organization. This included not only Arab states but also other Islamic states. And while that Islamic organization was never a major element in international affairs, it did for the period, say late '66 into '67 up to the June '67 war when everything changed, it did represent a balancing influence to Nasser's Pan-Arabism, against which Faisal's Pan Islamic movement was stacked. In that sense, in the Islamic sense, Saudi Arabia did play a much more significant regional role than it did in Arab affairs.

Q: Perhaps we should now ask about the impact of the '67 war on Saudi Arabia. In particular it has always interested me why the Saudi government did not in fact invoke the oil sanction against the west at that time?

EILTS: Well, it did do so. For a period of about two weeks the Saudi government did embargo all oil shipments to the United States. I remember when Faisal told me about this he said, “I don't want to do this, but I have to because of domestic pressures within the country itself.” Faisal had been out of Saudi Arabia at the time the June war started. Immediately after the war began there were rather strong demonstrations in various parts of Saudi Arabia against the United States, which was seen as the close friend of Israel. In

Dhahran the ARAMCO compound was overrun by mobs, the American military mission at the Dhahran airfield was overrun. In Jeddah one of the buildings at my Embassy was bombed. The Raytheon offices in Jeddah were bombed. The United States military training mission offices in Jeddah were bombed. By the time he came back—Faisal came back to Saudi Arabia within a matter of days after the June war broke out, it was clear to him that there was tremendous public sentiment against the US, not only on the part of the Saudi public at large, but on the part of the Saudi military as well. While one does not normally think of the Saudi military as a strong influence in political affairs, in the wartime situation that existed the Saudi military and its views played a part. The broadcasts that were coming from Arab radios, including the Saudi radio, in those first days was that Egypt had shot down 40 planes, Syria 15, Jordan a dozen or more, even little Lebanon 2. So it looked as though a massive Arab victory was about to take place. Nobody would believe suggestions that all of this kind of propaganda simply was not true. The Saudis wanted to believe otherwise. The Saudi army wanted so much to be part of the victory and this was part of the pressure on Faisal.

When Faisal came back, in order to respond to this pressure, in order to show dissatisfaction with the United States and its support for Israel, he placed an embargo on us. He ordered ARAMCO to do it. As it turned out, the embargo lasted only ten days —eleven days—but it didn't matter very much. Moreover, it was an embargo that was breached in many ways. We, for example, had some destroyers—two destroyers—in the Red Sea. We had deployed them in the latter part of May of '67 largely to assist the Saudis who were being pressed by the Egyptians in southern Jizan and the Najran areas. We had even sent one with an Admiral aboard into Jizan harbor. Then came the war and the resultant oil embargo imposed upon us because of Saudi public feeling that we were supporting Israel. We still had two of our ships in the Red Sea.

I remember going to Faisal and saying, “We've got to bunker these ships, otherwise they are dead in the water.” Faisal called in his oil Minister, Yamani, and the three of us worked out a scheme whereby our naval ships were not permitted to come into Jeddah, as had

been allowed before, but the Saudis would send out an oil barge in the middle of the night in order to bunker the ships. In that way he was assisting us. He recognized that, but he was not doing it in a visible fashion, which might have stirred public opinion. But for ten-eleven days until the war was over—it ended quickly, of course—the embargo was retained.

How else did the war affect things? I said before that, prior to the '67 war, Saudi Arabia's role in the Arab-Israeli context had been limited. Its leadership role had been in the Islamic rather than the Arab context. With the disastrous defeat that Egypt and Nasser suffered, and the Khartoum conference—first the Foreign Ministers, then the Chiefs of State—that was called a few months later to consider the situation in the Arab world, the Saudi role suddenly became prominent again. It would be wrong to say that Faisal was the leader of the Arab world, but because Saudi Arabia had the money, and Egypt did not, it was King Faisal at Khartoum who persuaded the Libyan and the Kuwaiti leadership to join with Saudi Arabia in providing large amounts of money to Egypt to assist Egypt during the period the Suez Canal was closed and during which transit income from the Suez Canal was not available to Egypt.

From that point on, the Saudi role in Arab affairs, not just Islamic, but in Arab affairs in general did go up. The Saudis were strongly anti-Israeli, but they never assumed for a minute that they had any capability to do anything about Israel. So their leadership in Arab affairs took two forms. One, they were the financiers of Nasser and to a lesser extent of Jordan and Syria. And two, they were strongly anti-Israeli, pressed us to do something to get Israel out of the Arab areas that Israel had occupied. That was the principal role that the Saudis played. Nasser had by that time no diplomatic relations with us; he had severed them during the war. So it was largely Saudi Arabia, as the only Arab country that presumably still had good relations with the United States, that played a major role as spokesman for the Arabs.

Q: Well, you worked very closely as you've indicated with King Faisal during your years as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. He was certainly a very distinguished Arab leader. I wonder what you might give as your assessment of King Faisal?

EILTS: I had very high regard for King Faisal. He looked like death warmed over most of the time. He was a cadaverous figure and always remained that no matter how much he might eat. He always looked emaciated. He was a man who had very strong ideas on Islam, Arabism. He was a man who was not given to hasty decisions. He thought things out very, very carefully before he rendered any decision on anything. He was a man of considerable balance, that is, he sought to maintain good Arab relations with the United States despite American support for Israel. And at the same time he worked for Arab unity. It was not a particularly easy thing to carry out these policies. He was a man, as I've already suggested, who was a very devout Muslim, indeed an Islamic fundamentalist —at least an Islamic fundamentalist in the kind of terms that one would have defined it in the '60s, not an Ayatollah Khomeini type. He was in many ways modern, he had lived and traveled in the West for a long period of time, he knew the West very well, he knew the United States very well. Nevertheless, every time it became an issue of an Islamic principle as opposed to the introduction of the western principle, he would always end up on the Islamic side.

I'm thinking in particular of a case that became very difficult having to do with the American school in Riyadh, which had been permitted and had operated for a good many years. One day one of the Saudi religious leaders happened to see that there were young girls in the school, and that official complained. He happened to be Director General of Women's Education. Now we thought initially, and certainly the school authorities in Riyadh thought, that this would quickly blow over, and that the King realized it was necessary to have an American school if American expatriates were to be kept there. The next thing we all knew was the school was ordered closed. When I went to King Faisal about this, I found that instead of accepting the point of view that the school was necessary, as far as he

was concerned the school authorities had done something that was contrary to Islamic precepts and he was not at all disposed to allow it to reopen.

Here was a case in which on a practical issue involving an Islamic value system and an American value system were in a state of conflict. It took me about four to five months before I could persuade Faisal to find ways and means of reopening that school. Even then it had to be done with women—when I talk about women, I'm talking about little girls—and boys segregated. Now that is the kind of thing one would not initially have thought Faisal would feel that strongly about. But that's the kind of person he was.

He had a rather reserved sense of humor. He was a man who was in many ways unlike what one associates with so many Saudi leaders. He was penurious. He was not disposed to throw out riyals to crowds or anything of that sort. The palace that he was building for himself in Jeddah took 13 years to build because he was using only his private money, not public funds. When he finally had it finished, he didn't like it. He never wanted to move into it, and he continued to live in an old house in Jeddah that really was anything but palatial. That was his style. A simple man in his personal tastes, but a man who felt very strongly about Islam and would always side with Islamic precepts. Nevertheless, he sought to move the country forward. We used to say two steps forward, one step back, but at least the overall movement was forward, even though somewhat sluggishly.

Q: What about any comments on other members of the royal family you may have had close dealings, particularly, for example, the then Prince Fahd?

EILTS: Fahd at that time was Minister of Interior initially. He was the senior member of the so-called Sudairi Group, the seven full brothers, the largest sibling cluster in the Saud family, the Sudairi Seven. Fahd, although he had supported Faisal at the time Faisal had taken over from the other half-brother, King Saud, was not very close to Faisal. He did not attend, for example, the daily sessions where the princes and others would come to what was called a Majlis, that is to “sit” with Faisal. Fahd never did so. Fahd was seen by

Faisal as too liberal. Fahd talked about setting up a more liberal system of government and this was something that Faisal didn't particularly like. Fahd was seen by Faisal as somewhat insolent. When Fahd went abroad for medical treatment, and was allowed, say two weeks off, he would not show up again for six-eight weeks, despite urgent messages from the King, “get back here.” While abroad Fahd was involved in gambling, things of that sort, and it wasn't so much that this was unusual, but that the publicity surrounding what Fahd was doing, particularly in Nice, was embarrassing to the family. So the two of them, Faisal and Fahd, were never very close. Indeed, it was necessary for me, as American Ambassador, even though most of my dealings clearly were with Faisal, who was also the Foreign Minister, to make a point from time to time of going to Fahd just to fill him in so that there was no suggestion that the American Ambassador did not recognize Fahd's status.

Fahd, in 1968, I guess it was, became not only Minister of Interior, the job he had had, but also Second Deputy Prime Minister. This happened almost by default. The man who had been Second Deputy Prime Minister, Crown Prince Khalid, a half-brother of the King, intensely disliked cabinet functions. Khalid was not the kind of person who cared about details. So one fine day he told Faisal, “I'm no longer going to continue to preside over the cabinet.” Faisal tried to dissuade him, tried to keep him in that office, but Khalid would have none of it. Which suddenly made it necessary for Faisal, who did not have the time himself to attend all cabinet sessions, to name another Deputy Prime Minister.

Q: Excuse me, I'm sort of confused. Who was the First Deputy Prime Minister?

EILTS: Khalid. The King himself was both King and Prime Minister. Khalid was the First Deputy Prime Minister, who presided over cabinet sessions most of the time, and he didn't want to continue to do so. He preferred to be on the hunt or something of this sort. It was Khalid, to the surprise of many, and I think in many ways to Faisal's chagrin, who proposed Fahd as Second Deputy Prime Minister. Because Fahd, at the time at least, was one of the more active young princes. And Faisal had reluctantly to agree. So Fahd became

Second Deputy Prime Minister and in that function tended to preside over most cabinet sessions. That action, i.e., in effect the designation of Fahd as Second Deputy Prime Minister, was generally recognized by Saudis as meaning that Fahd was a likely successor to the throne. It did not make his succession formal, but as Second Deputy Prime Minister, and given Khalid's indifference to governmental affairs, Fahd was seen from that point on as the likely successor, if not the next time around, the time after.

Q: Any significant comments on any family member?

EILTS: On Fahd?

Q: Or any other member.

EILTS: Well, I guess the only other one who really made much difference was the full brother of Fahd's, Sultan. He was totally different from Fahd. He was Minister of Defense at that time and he's still Minister of Defense, I guess he's probably the longest serving Minister of Defense in any state today, almost 25 years. He was and is an absolute dynamo of a man, bustling back and forth with an uncanny ability to keep all kinds of complicated issues in his head, but with very few files. And unlike Fahd, Sultan was very much of a conservative similar to what Faisal was. Sultan and Faisal got along well. Sultan regularly went and “sat” with the King. The King had tremendous confidence in Sultan. There were never any of the criticisms, real or implied, that were made against Fahd. Sultan was close to Faisal, and I must say Sultan, in my judgement, has done a great deal for Saudi Arabia over the years.

Q: In your time there—of course you had a lot of dealings with Faisal and other members of the royal family, but your channel as I remember it was the Foreign Office which was headed for most of that period by Omar Saqqaf, who, of course, was not a member of the royal family. Was there anything of interest in that relationship? Did he have some influence, or was he a post box, or what?

EILTS: Saqqaf had a great deal of influence. I've indicated before that Faisal was not only King, but also Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. So Omar Saqqaf was Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. Faisal had enormous confidence in Saqqaf, even though the two were, in terms of personality, totally different. Faisal deputed a great deal to Saqqaf. The Foreign Office was in Jeddah. Faisal spent most of the time during the year, not the summer months, but during the year in Riyadh. That meant one went to Saqqaf for any normal routine business, and Saqqaf was one of those unusual Saudis—in fact unusual Arabs in any Arab government—who took responsibility. He would give you decisions, give you answers, at once. He knew a great deal about the royal family, he knew a great deal about what policy was. As a matter of fact, as so often is the case, someone like him helped to formulate policy. When an issue was of sufficient importance that he felt he could not answer it, he'd say, “You better see the King on that.” But the relations of Saqqaf and Faisal were good. Faisal had great trust in him. To be sure, Faisal sometimes criticized Saqqaf for not coming to sit with him in this Majlis fashion. Saqqaf would go to Riyadh when he had to, to meet with the King, he never cared for another royal adviser of Faisal's, a doctor Rashad Pharaon, hence Saqqaf would avoid sitting with him. Saqqaf did not want to discuss business in which he was involved—and I'm talking about official business—with anybody else around, and he would insist on seeing Faisal alone. That made Saqqaf a bit of a lone wolf in the Saudi elite governmental circle. But despite whatever displeasure Faisal from time to time showed for Saqqaf's independence, he trusted him until the end and gave him pretty much carte blanche authority. So it was possible to deal with Saqqaf and to get answers much more quickly.

True, it was rather an inefficient kind of way, having in mind that the King, the final source of authority was in Riyadh, and the Foreign Office in Jeddah, and the Embassy was also in Jeddah. It was not one of the most efficient ways of getting things done when there were major issues involved. But on a day to day basis it worked very well indeed. Certainly Saqqaf had much more authority than any other member of the Saudi Arabian Foreign Office. Even when you went to one of his Under Secretaries, who theoretically should have

had some authority, you could get no answers. On the other hand, from Saqqaf you could always get answers. And I don't remember a single occasion in which Saqqaf gave me an answer to something where perhaps later he had to say, “I'm sorry, I was wrong on that.” His answers were invariably upheld by the King.

Q: I think the final question I have on Saudi Arabia—you may want to add other things—is that, as you indicated, the United States support for Israel in the '67 war was a complicating factor in relations with Arab states out there including Saudi Arabia. Was this something that was sort of lasting? You left in 1970 and during that period 1967 to 1970 would you say our relations suffered because of this position that we were increasingly taking?

EILTS: Well, they certainly were not helped by the position that we were taking, but perhaps they didn't suffer as much as they might have. The thing went through phases. For a period of about six months after the June war, even through the Khartoum conference and to the end of that year, Saudi military officers, for example, would have nothing to do with our Military Training Mission, nothing to do with it. They were bitter about what had happened. Saudi friends, people I had known for many years and worked with all along, would have nothing to do with me or with Americans. There was a sense of bitterness about the US attitude. It didn't apply to Saqqaf, it didn't apply to the King, it didn't apply to Sultan or Fahd, but generally speaking we were put in a cold freeze for a long period of time. It didn't matter so much because the people in authority were still willing to talk to us and, of course, we were still providing military equipment. This they still wanted.

The second thing that happened during this period, which had already begun during the six months immediately after the war but continued thereafter, was the effort on the part of Faisal to persuade the United States to condemn Israel publicly for having begun the war. He saw the '67 war, the Israeli preemption, as Israeli aggression. The United States took the position that the Egyptian action, Nasser's actions in May, had been what we called a proximate cause of the war and therefore blame should be shared. Faisal, who

after Khartoum provided money to Egypt and thus brought about the Egyptian withdrawal from Yemen, causing at least the Saudi-Egyptian clash on Yemen to subside—Faisal continued to say, “Well, at the moment Nasser is well behaved, but quite frankly once he gets back on top again, he's not going to change. So as far as I'm concerned if you feel that Nasser's actions were a proximate cause of the war, I don't care if you publicly condemn Nasser and the Israelis so long as you include the Israelis in such a public condemnation.” We were not willing to do so. The discussions on this went on and on and on and in part became subsumed also in discussions over what UN Resolution 242, the resolution that was passed in the fall of '67 on settling the Arab-Israeli dispute, what was it supposed to do. It's language was vague. Did it mean going back to the '67 borders? As you might imagine, Faisal, and the other Arabs also, saw it as such. There was a sense of disappointment and even bitterness when the United States suddenly indicated that having been responsible for dropping the definite article “those” before theword “territories”, that this meant not all of the occupied territory.

So it was a period of considerable tension between the United States and the Saudi government over the issue of what the United States proposed to do in order to undo the consequences of the war. Would it publicly condemn Israel along with Egypt, which Faisal wanted. What did withdrawal from territories mean? Things of that sort. Still, despite all of these things, our relationships remained pretty good.

The Yemeni conflict was still underway, but the Egyptians were out. Faisal was feeling his oats. Essentially, as I look back on it, it was Faisal who was determined, despite Saudi unhappiness, and his own unhappiness about the United States position, to maintain our relationship. I think he was strongly supported in this by Omar Saqqaf, but Saqqaf's influence wasn't that great over matters of this sort, but also by Prince Sultan. Sultan wanted American weapons, wanted arms deliveries to continue. And that was always one of those factors that overrode Saudi unhappiness with our policy vis-a-vis Israel. So on the one hand, you'd get these flashes of lightning from the King and others on what you're

doing or not doing with respect to Israel. On the other it was never carried to a point where the basic relationship was so threatened that military aid would no longer be forthcoming.

There was a period when the June war started where the Saudis very seriously considered sending the American Ambassador home. There was nothing personal about this, but simply as a gesture of protest. I think frankly that, if Faisal had been in Saudi Arabia on the first day of the war, the immediate pressure on him might have required him to do so. By the time he got back two-three days later, there were other things that he had to do and the idea of showing Saudi displeasure by asking the American Ambassador to leave was no longer high on their priority list. But it was a period of considerable tension and it continued to be that into 1970.

UN Resolution 242 was passed, as I pointed out, in November of '67; then the implementation of it, that was agonizing. Then, of course, incidents arose like the burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque about which the King felt very, very deeply, blaming the Israelis for that act. So it was a constant—the remaining period I was there, '67 to '70—it was a constant series of problems large and small having to do with the aftermath of the June war. What do you do about UN Resolution 242, what does it mean? The Israelis are in Jerusalem and this bothered the King terribly because to him Jerusalem was one of the three holy sites of Islam. The idea that it should be in Jewish hands was totally unacceptable.

Q: After you left Saudi Arabia in 1970 you were assigned for three years as Deputy Commandant to the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and then you were named to Cairo. What exactly were the circumstances of your appointment, because I believe we did not have a full Embassy in Cairo at that time?

EILTS: No. Since Nasser broke diplomatic relations with the US in 1967, we maintained an United States Interests Section, as it was called, which was under the Spanish Embassy. The Interests Section had initially consisted of 14 people. But when I arrived in Cairo in

November '73—early November—the number was down to seven. Sadat had reduced the number from 14 to seven. We were still in our Embassy compound, but we were not using most of the buildings. Around its perimeter walls were Spanish flags, and a Spanish flag flew over the compound. Now, during the October of '73 Arab-Israel war, Kissinger had undertaken a mediation effort. It had, I must admit, been conducted in a fashion where the Israelis were given the opportunity to take a bit more land in terms of timing when the cease-fire would go into effect. But, nevertheless, he had done this, and he made his first trip to the Middle East in early November. Kissinger had been named Secretary of State just six to eight weeks before that time. He found that Sadat was much more disposed to work with the United States than even he had anticipated. He knew that Sadat was interested in improving relations with the United States, but that Sadat was willing to accept some of the ideas that he put forth, which had really come from Golda Meir, surprised him.

In any case, out of that first visit came an agreement between Kissinger and Sadat that the diplomatic dialogue between the two countries would be elevated to what was called in the communique, Ambassadorial-level. This did not mean that Sadat was reestablishing diplomatic relations, but persons of Ambassadorial rank would be in each other's capitals. I was named to Cairo and Dr. Ashraf Ghorbal, who had been head of the Interests Section—Egyptian Interests Section—in Washington for a number of years, was given Ambassador rank in Washington. It was understood at the time this happened that Kissinger would make an effort to achieve a disengagement agreement, something that was finally done in January of '74, i.e., three months later, and has come to be called Sinai I. Once that disengagement agreement was implemented, then there would be a formal resumption of diplomatic relations. Nobody knew how long this would take, but that was the general idea. So I went to Cairo. I received formal notification, I guess it was on the 7th of November, although Kissinger had told me he wanted to do this. He had called me down from Carlisle a week before he left to tell me about it. I got the message in Carlisle during the day that I had been named, that the White House had named me, and that

night also received a telegraph message from Kissinger, who was flying at the time from Cairo to Pakistan, asking me to get on an Air Force plane and meet him for breakfast the following day in Islamabad. And so I did that. The initial idea was that I would then come back from Islamabad to Carlisle and pack up. When I got to Pakistan—to Islamabad—and had a very brief breakfast with Kissinger, from whom I learned nothing about the status of things in Cairo, he said, “Instead of going back to Carlisle, go directly to Cairo.” So I arrived in Cairo just three days after I had left Carlisle, by way of Islamabad, and took over the US Interests Section there. I was still under the Spanish Embassy. The Egyptians were very, very careful not to take any protocol actions that would suggest they were resuming formal diplomatic relations with the US But at the same time it was obvious that they wanted higher level dialogue.

I was called to the Foreign Minister, Ismail Fahmy, almost the first day I got there for a long talk. And from that time on I saw him almost daily. I did not meet Sadat until about two weeks after I was in Cairo, that's when the first meeting was arranged. By then—this was the period when there were difficulties over the cease-fire, the Israelis would not allow relief trucks to go through to the Third Army—carrying sweaters, things of that sort. By the end of two weeks, however, while those problems had not been entirely resolved, the Egyptians apparently felt enough progress had been made that they arranged a meeting for me with Sadat. From that time on I saw Sadat, as well as Fahmy, regularly. Secure telephone connections were established by the Egyptians so that Sadat or Fahmy could get me anytime and vice versa.

I guess the one thing that has always puzzled me a bit in those early days—my instructions from Kissinger, given to me in Islamabad, were, “Don't say anything to the Egyptians if you get an instruction, don't say anything to them, until you've first told the Soviet Ambassador.” So in the period of the first several days, every instruction that I received, and we were getting NIACT messages, FLASH messages, all the time on all kinds of matters, and sending them out also (which with that tiny staff was somewhat difficult) I had to tell the Soviet Ambassador, a man named Vinogradov, first. The result

of this was that every time I went to see Fahmy to make whatever representation had to be made, on the basis of an instruction, I had already told the Soviet Ambassador about what I expected to say, and I subsequently found that he had been in to see Fahmy first and had for all practical purposes told the Egyptians about the United States position and very often in distorted form. It was a lousy way to operate. I finally complained bitterly in a message to Kissinger saying, “This isn't going to work. I understand that you want to retain good relations with (Soviet Ambassador to the US) Dobrynin, [which is why he had done it], but let me convey to the Egyptians on my instructions first and then tell Vinogradov about them, rather than the other way around.” I finally did get approval from Kissinger to do that. But it was a rather strange way to operate initially. Vinogradov, who had been there for years, and enjoyed the prestige of long standing Soviet support for Egypt, had entree to everyone. The new American Ambassador, not yet with a full Embassy, or formally recognized as such, still operating under the Spanish flag, with a considerable element of distrust of United States purposes, was still prevalent.

One thing that worked in our favor was that the Egyptians, encouraged by the Egyptian government prior to my arrival there, spread the word that the United States would shortly provide huge quantities of economic aid. As a result, all of Egypt's economic problems would be resolved. So that gave me an Egyptian public reception that was much more positive than the governmental reception, except in the case of Fahmy and the Foreign Office and Sadat. Other Egyptian officials remained suspicious and uncertain for a good many months and limited themselves to formal contacts with the new American Ambassador.

Q: One of the most dramatic periods in recent US foreign policy occurred while you were in Egypt in the position you describe as Ambassador. I refer to the so-called shuttle diplomacy of Henry Kissinger which produced the accords known as Sinai I, and then one having to do with the Golan in Syria and then Sinai II in 1974 and 1975. I wonder if you would like to comment on your role and your assessment of this activity?

EILTS: The Sinai I disengagement agreement took place in January of '74. It followed a very brief meeting of the so-called Geneva Conference that had taken place a few days before Christmas of '73. The cease-fire resolution that the United Nations had passed in October of '73 had called, among other things, for convening an international conference to try to settle outstanding matters between Israel and the Arab states, Egypt among them. It was with that thought in mind that efforts were made between the end of October-November and the end of '73, to get such a conference going with the Soviets and the United States as co-chairmen. There was a difference of view between the Soviets and the United States on how the conference should be organized. The Soviets did not want the United Nations Secretary General involved. In that respect their position was very consistent, very close, to that of Israel. We didn't care about UN involvement, but the Arabs wanted UN involvement so we went along with that to make it a little easier for Sadat. A conference, as I've said, was eventually held in Geneva, just before Christmas of '73.

We thought in early December that we had Syria's agreement to go to that conference and participate. This was after President Assad had visited Cairo in early December. At that time Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy called in the Soviet and American Ambassadors, jointly, and said, “I'm speaking in behalf of the two presidents. Both countries are prepared to go to Geneva on the following understandings and listed them. You set the dates for the conference.” The conditions were frankly those that we had proposed. The Soviets were unhappy about them, but they were anxious to get to a conference. Hence they swallowed their doubts and agreed to go. When Assad got back to Damascus, he reneged on this and subsequent efforts on the part of the Egyptians, who sent their Minister of Defense to Damascus to urge Syria to participate, did not cause them to change their minds.

But Geneva did take place. It was largely a pro forma session with most parties present. The Egyptians, the Americans, the Soviets, the Israelis, the Jordanians all expressed their

views. There were no Palestinians there. Then the conference was adjourned with the intention of reconvening early in January, '74, after the Christmas holidays.

It was in the period after the adjournment of the Geneva conference, in early January, that the United States, as a result of both Israeli desires and even Egyptian desires, persuaded the two governments to scuttle the international conference idea, and to opt instead for an unilateral American effort to settle the issue. So, when January '74 came, Geneva did not reconvene. Instead, Henry Kissinger came out and began a ten-day shuttle effort, out of which came Sinai I. Sinai I was a very limited disengagement agreement. It called for Israeli forces to leave the canal. They were already, of course, away from the canal as the result of the October war, the Barlev line had been breached, but they now moved back a bit more, a very short distance and a small Egyptian force was allowed to deploy on the eastern bank of the canal. A United Nations emergency force was interposed between the Israelis and the Egyptians.

I remember when that agreement was signed. Every one of Sadat's advisers was bitter about it. They felt that what Egypt was gaining from it was incommensurate with the sacrifices that it had made and the successes, at least as they perceived them, they had had in the October war. Nevertheless, even though Sadat himself was also disappointed at the modest gains that he had gotten from Sinai I, he worked on the basis that, “By accepting a little now, the United States will remain engaged and I'll be able to get more later.” So he overruled all of his advisers and accepted Sinai I. It took a period of roughly six weeks to implement the withdrawal phases for the Israeli forces and to position UN forces between the Egyptians and Israelis. By the 28th of February of 1974, all of this had been completed and, on that day, in accordance with what had been agreed upon, formal diplomatic relations were resumed between the US and Egypt. The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Fahmy, came to the American Embassy compound and was present when our flag went up again and formal diplomatic relations now again existed. We were no longer part of the Spanish Embassy.

Another part of the effort on the American side was to persuade the Saudi Arabian government and the other Gulf oil producing states, who had at the beginning of the October War imposed an embargo on the United States, to lift the embargo. Kissinger pointed to Sinai I as evidence that “the United States is now involved and so you should lift the embargo.” Interestingly enough, for a brief period of time, the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st of January, we thought we had Faisal's agreement—now that Sinai I had been signed to lift the oil embargo. But Assad intervened with Faisal and insisted that the embargo not be lifted until and unless there was also a Golan disengagement. This required Kissinger to do something that he really would have preferred not to do, that is to try to negotiate something with the Syrians and the Israelis. But by April of '74, since we were unable to persuade the Saudis and other, even with Sadat's help, to lift the oil embargo, Kissinger engaged himself in Golan efforts. That was much more difficult to obtain than the Sinai I agreement. It had taken ten days for Sinai I, including a day's trip to Luxor sightseeing. In the case of Assad and Golan I, it took 31 days, and a lot of effort on the part of the Egyptians to persuade the Syrians. Eventually, however, a disengagement agreement was signed, as Golan I, in early May.

Now with that the question arose, “what about Jordan?” It was Kissinger's hope that he might try another disengagement agreement between Israel and Jordan on the West Bank, but then would not have to do anything for a time with respect to a second disengagement agreement for Egypt. By that time, however, Sadat, who had been criticized and continued to be criticized by the Arabs for the modest nature of Sinai I, felt a second disengagement agreement for Egypt was necessary. People were beginning to say the United States was planning to freeze the situation with these modest Israeli withdrawals, hence Sadat should press the US to do something more. Sadat was saying to us, “No, I've got to have something also. I have no objection to Jordan, of course, getting a disengagement agreement but it has got to happen again with us as well.” That faced Kissinger with the problem of what to do. In a sense it was made easier for him when the Israelis indicated to him that the most they were willing to do for Jordan was to give up six

kilometers in the West Bank, hardly up to Jericho. That was so minor an area that it was hardly a meaningful agreement. So an agreement with Jordan was ruled out. In a sense that was one of the great mistakes, as I look back, that we made. It opened the way to the subsequent decision at the Rabat Summit Conference in November '74, to naming the PLO as spokesman.

In any case Kissinger then decided that the focus would again have to be on Egypt, but we were in no hurry to do so. Although Sadat was anxious to get something done, we had promised the Israelis, who had said they needed time to absorb the losses they had sustained, the things they had suffered, the psychological blows of the October war and of the Sinai I disengagement agreement, that we would not rush into a second agreement. So we were doing nothing.

I say, “nothing”, but we went through some postural proceedings. President Nixon came to Egypt in June of '74, a big affair, and promised military and economic assistance. A month later, Bill Simon, Secretary of Treasury, came out. The Egyptians were constantly expecting the famous economic package for which they hoped. Simon did nothing on that score.

So by the time August-September came around, the Egyptians were showing signs of disillusionment. No further progress on peace had taken place. Is the situation being deliberately frozen, was the question that was being asked. No US economic aid nor military aid had yet appeared. Nixon left office because of Watergate. A new President, Ford, came in. By the latter part of the year the Egyptians were very upset. In October of that year, i.e., '74, the Soviets invited the Egyptian Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs to Moscow. The Soviets were by then furious, of course, about having been excluded from Sinai I and Golan I. They now dangled all kinds of military assistance and economic assistance before the Egyptians. The Egyptian ministers came back with their mouths drooling, but the Russians said, “We will not sign anything until and unless Brezhnev comes to Cairo in January—January '75, a few months later, and you Egyptians

agree that no further peace talks will take place other than in the Geneva Conference forum." In other words, scuttle the American unilateral effort and go back to the multilateral Geneva conference.

Fahmy, the Egyptian military and other senior Egyptians all strongly urged Sadat to go along with the Soviet proposal. The prospect that he might do so in November, that is to go along with it, i.e., make such a commitment to the Soviets, forced the Ford administration to decide to go ahead even though Israel had not yet had the time that it said it needed to absorb the psychological shocks it had experienced. We made a proposal to the Egyptians that Kissinger would come out in December of '74 for a quick trip through the area, go back home, and then come out again in March—several months later, the end of February, early March—to begin a second shuttle effort. There were two elements that initially affected the Egyptian views. First, public pressures on Sadat that you can't trust the Americans, so no, let's go back to Geneva. Second, none of the promised US aid had come.

The other was, "All right, let's for a moment say that we want to work with the Americans, accept their view. Why this two stage thing? Why, if Kissinger is coming out in December, cannot he start the shuttle immediately?" Well, the reason was the Israelis were not yet conditioned to a renewed shuttle effort. In any case, the debate lasted about a week as to what the Egyptians would do, and it finally took a letter from President Ford to Sadat saying, "I'm asking you to continue our unilateral effort, to turn the Soviets down." This time, he again overruled the advice of his Ministers, and went along with our proposal, but with grave reservations. Kissinger came out, made the rounds of Middle East capitals, went back, and in March of the following year ('75) did begin a second shuttle effort. By that time, he thought he had Israeli agreement to give up the oil fields in the Gulf of Suez, and to move back in Sinai to the Gidi and Mitla Passes.

Q: To the Passes, not beyond them.

EILTS: The question of exactly who would hold the Passes was left vague. So he came out and we had in the meantime made efforts to obtain some Egyptian political concessions. I had had instructions to try to persuade Sadat to make certain political concessions. He was very doubtful about doing so. In the negotiations that Kissinger conducted on the second shuttle effort, some of these proposed political concessions were again raised, including one point on renouncing belligerency. He was not prepared to do so, but agreed that a declaration of non-resort to war was acceptable. In any case, to Sadat's chagrin and to Kissinger's even greater chagrin, it turned out that on his last trip in the shuttle effort to Israel, the Israelis, whatever someone may have told him earlier, were not prepared to give up the oil fields. Nor were they prepared to withdraw to the Mitla and Gidi Passes. Hence Kissinger had to call off his shuttle effort and go back to the US He was furious and blamed the Israelis for the impasse. In all fairness, they were responsible. This was a critical period. The question arose in Egypt, “Isn't this evidence of the fact that Sadat in putting so many eggs in the American basket, has made a big mistake? No one was quite sure how the Egyptians would take the collapse of the shuttle effort. Sadat took it much more calmly than one would have expected. By then, the Congress had voted $250 million dollars (in late December) for economic aid. That was not very much, but it nevertheless was something. There was as yet no military aid but Sadat continued to hope that the US would eventually work out a second disengagement agreement.

Out of this, for the United States, came the so-called reassessment of Middle East policy, which was really aimed at Israel. It lasted about three months, from March well into the summer months. During that time, I was instructed to come to Washington and to take Israeli positions and take them back to the Egyptians, go back and forth and convey Egyptian positions to Washington to be passed on to the Israelis on things such as, “Where are the Gidi and Mitla Passes?” The two passes were rather long, where and to what point in the Passes would Israeli troops withdraw, and other arrangements on political concessions. I did that for a period of four months. I guess I must have made 20 trips back and forth between Cairo to Washington during that period.

Q: I'm not clear. Why did you have to go to Washington every time?

EILTS: That's the way Kissinger wanted to handle it. He would get the Israeli views through (Israeli Ambassador) Dinitz in Washington, and he wanted to handle exchanges there. So he summoned me and I would go back and forth between Cairo and Washington carrying Israeli and Egyptian positions. It was a terribly laborious job.

Q: The Israelis didn't have to travel.

EILTS: They didn't have to travel at all. In any case, by the beginning of August the situation had changed. By then there had been Senate and Congressional pressure on the administration to lay off Israel. In other words, “this reassessment of the Ford administration, don't take it out on Israel.” So Kissinger's reassessment idea, as a pressure device against Israel, was not working that well.

Q: Excuse me if I'm breaking in, but that's very interesting that the Congress should have...

EILTS: We had the letter of the seventy-six Senators sent to Ford saying that Kissinger seemed, in his Middle East reassessment, to be blaming Israel. The Senators' message was loud and clear: lay off Israel.

Q: Was there any evidence in the Executive Branch that this was in any way stimulated or this was simply the concern on the part of elected members of the government?

EILTS: Well, the suspicion was that it was stimulated, that the Israelis used their assets with the Congress to get this kind of a letter sent, but obviously in our governmental system such a letter is a very potent thing. So that placed more emphasis on renewing the quiet effort to bring the parties' positions together. By early August, Kissinger had concluded that the Israeli and Egyptian positions, while still apart, were close enough that he could risk another shuttle effort. And by then he had a firmer commitment from the Israelis that they would give up the oil fields. Not the two new fields that they had

drilled, the Alma fields, but the ones that had existed before the '67 war. They had also agreed they would go back to the passes. We then got involved in determining just where the passes were divided and things of that sort but these were manageable issues. In early December '75, Kissinger again began a shuttle effort and this time it worked. He negotiated the Sinai II agreement, which was signed in mid-September.

Kissinger needed an agreement. He had failed in March of that year so he desperately needed an agreement for his own reputation. Sadat also needed an agreement for the same reason; he, too, had failed in March and Egyptians were again questioning the wisdom of his policy of working so closely with the United States. So Sadat was willing to make some political concessions in order to obtain an agreement. Israel, while it may very well have wanted an agreement, didn't need it. Hence, Israel had leverage on the United States in order to get concessions from the United States as the price for an agreement. One of these concessions was the Kissinger memorandum, the famous Kissinger memorandum to the Israelis, that said, “We will not talk to the PLO unless they recognize Israel, and recognize UN Resolution 242.” Initially we never told the Egyptians about this memorandum. When they began to hear reports of it, information on exactly what had been said was simply dribbled to them by Kissinger in incomplete form. They were furious about it, absolutely furious, because they, as you might imagine, wanted the PLO in the negotiating process at some point. By then, however, the Sinai II agreement was signed, and there was very little they could do about it. The Sinai II agreement was in fact implemented over a period of time. The Israelis retired to the passes. The oil fields were returned to Egypt. Arrangements were made for Egyptians and Israelis to use a single road in the lower part of the Sinai near the oil fields. And, generally speaking, the implementation of Sinai II, from a technical point of view, went well.

Q: Would you say, looking back on it, that as some have charged, the Sinai I Accord would make good sense, it was a disengagement agreement, but in the Sinai II Accord the price paid by the United States Government, particularly in such a servitude as that mentioned,

the memorandum having to do with the PLO, made it perhaps too costly in terms of long-term US foreign policy?

EILTS: I think it did, and I'm not thinking about either military or economic aid to Israel, that would have happened anyway. But in terms of tying our hands vis-a-vis the Palestinians, from that point on our hands were tied. We could not talk to the Palestinians, at least not formally on political matters, unless they issued such a public statement. That is, accepted 242 and the right of Israel to exist. The demands were not necessarily unreasonable, but to expect the PLO leadership to come out with a public statement of that sort when Israel was rejecting the PLO, was perhaps more than we should have given. From that point on our greatest vulnerability in pursuing an effective mediatory role in the peace process was our inability to have dialogue, real dialogue with the PLO. I'm not talking about consular dialogue, or security dialogue, but political dialogue. And that continues to be our greatest liability, in my judgement, on all of this.

The Israelis got exactly what they wanted. They not only got military and economic aid in larger amounts, but they received a commitment from the US that henceforth we would not deal with the PLO. And they knew that the PLO leadership was not in a position to make the kind of statement that they were insisting upon. So they effectively excluded the PLO from future negotiations and by doing so they hoped to constrict the Palestinian aspect of the Arab-Israeli problem to West Bank-Gaza Palestinians. That has, of course, been the focus ever since, i.e., to get West Bank-Gaza people to be the representative Palestinian, and to consider the PLO, the expatriates, as unacceptable participants and to have nothing to do with them.

Q: Well, that was the essence of the Kissinger shuttle diplomacy.

EILTS: Excuse me, may I make one point? Kissinger always argued when he subsequently tried to explain to Fahmy and to Sadat the significance of the memorandum that it did not tie our hands. He contended that, if we reached a decision that we wanted

to talk to the PLO, that the PLO leadership was sufficiently constructive in its views that we wanted to talk to them, all we had to do under the memorandum was to tell Israel, speak to Israel, that we planned to do so. The decision to do so, he argued, was entirely ours. We would assume that they would object, but if we wanted to do it, we could go ahead. In other words, all that was required was a kind of consultative process, with Israel, but a consultative process in which we retained discretionary right to make the decision. That was his professed view. It was a little disingenuous, but theoretically under the Ford administration, with Nixon there, that could have been done. That was the way he, at least, explained it. The Egyptian leadership was not persuaded.

When we got to the Carter administration, which was a very legalistic administration, with (Secretary of State) Cyrus Vance a lawyer, it read the Kissinger memoranda in much more strict constructionist terms. The Palestinians had to make a public statement consistent with the Kissinger memorandum. Vance believed that we had no choice if they didn't make a statement of that sort; that we had no discretionary authority to scrap the agreement. So in that sense, although Kissinger always claimed that the agreement gave us much more discretionary authority if we chose to exercise it, the Carter administration read the memorandum in more legalistic terms and binding. Kissinger was always paranoid on Palestinians and he would not have done anything about talking to the PLO, but he argued the memorandum gave us flexibility to do so if we wished. But subsequent administrations read it differently.

Q: Well you had, of course, over the years, very close contact with Secretary Kissinger. He was a distinguished Secretary, but also I think a controversial Secretary. I wonder if you would have some comment on your observation of his style of operation?

EILTS: I have great admiration for Kissinger. I had my encounters with him. I twice resigned on him, once almost at the beginning on one of his early missions, and once later during Sinai II, because I disliked the way he was doing things. I guess I'm one of the few Ambassadors who did stand up to him, and somehow he did not resent my doing

so. He seemed to respect it and I was then one of the few Ambassadors whom he never criticized. He was utterly merciless, however, in talking to other Ambassadors, some very senior Ambassadors. His handling, his treatment of them publicly, was very often shameful, but that never happened with me. Somehow my two resignations seemed to have had some effect on him.

Working with Kissinger was intellectual fun. He had a quick mind. He could come up with ideas. He was a conceptualizer, which was very important. He looked down the road in terms of where we should be going. Whether we got to that point is something else, but it was fun working with him, in an intellectual and a policy sense. Also, in that context, when suggestions, proposals, were made to him—when I made them to him for example—I had a great many of them accepted. We've all been in the Foreign Service long enough that you know you don't win them all, but I found I could have an influence on Kissinger.

With the tiny Embassy that we had in Cairo (ten people), even after we became an Embassy our numbers did not increase by more than three or four, we accomplished a great deal. I was a bug on keeping the Embassy small, and I had the good fortune to have superb people, every one of them was just outstanding. Kissinger thought the world of my staff and rightly so. They really did remarkable feats in Aswan during the Sinai I negotiations. Thus, although Kissinger could drive you mad, working erratically day and night, nevertheless, in an Embassy such as ours which was always responsive, he was one of the great supporters of that mission. And all of my people...I arranged in due course they got the kind of assignments that they wanted, always with Kissinger's strong support. That was a positive thing.

I guess the fourth thing I'd say is that his negotiating technique was largely one of telling each party, as he went back and forth, I won't say half-truths, but just half of the story and keeping the other half to himself. And then, at the appropriate time, he would dribble additional bits of information that might not be particularly palatable, but by that time there had been agreement on the earlier half of his proposal. So it went back and forth. While

this procedure sometimes offended my sense of integrity, and I do not say that he was not a man of integrity, but my own sense of how things should be done, I have to admit it was a very effective way of operating. And I agree with the comment that you made a few moments ago, he was an extraordinarily able Secretary of State.

The greatest criticism I have of him was his sense of paranoia. He persisted in seeing practically the whole State Department, or most of the people in the State Department, as people whom he could not trust and therefore excluded on so many, many things; not just Middle East matters but others as well. I regard our State Department colleagues, with rare exceptions, as one of the finest and ablest and most knowledgeable bodies of officers that we have in the US Government. He insisted on working with a very tiny group. If you were in that group, then you had access to all information. If you weren't, then you were practically an outsider. That was a mistake because when he came in as Secretary of State, all kinds of officers in the State Department were delighted. They were finally getting a leader whom they could follow. Then, to find themselves excluded, created disillusionment. I always thought his attitude was a mistake, but he contended most State Department officers were not loyal to him.

Q: After the end of the Ford Administration, President Carter was elected and, as you indicated earlier, the contest for influence between the Soviets and ourselves in Egypt was a significant element in your time out there. In October 1977 one of the first things that the Carter Administration did with respect to the Near East, was: it issued a joint statement on the Mid-East with Moscow. What was the reaction to that in Cairo and why did we get involved in that?

EILTS: From the time the Carter Administration came in; that is, in the beginning of '77, almost a week or two weeks after Carter took over, Carter decided two things: 1) he was going to give the Middle East problem, which had been on hold throughout '76, high priority; 2) he was going to go for a comprehensive settlement, which meant scrapping the step by step approach and going back to the Geneva Conference. For the better part of

'77, therefore, from the moment Carter took over, he tried to put into place a number of building blocks to get us to Geneva by the end of that year. Sadat was delighted about the comprehensive approach. The Israelis were not that happy, but Peres was Prime Minister initially, and he reluctantly went along with it.

One of the building blocks was talking to all of the leaders, Israeli and Arab, about the conference and how the conference would be shaped. Out of those various talks came an agreement on a Syrian proposal that there would be a unified Arab delegation, not individual Arab national delegations. Now, Sadat initially didn't like that, he wanted an Egyptian delegation—a national delegation—but this was the price of Syrian participation. We sold it to Sadat on the grounds that it offered us a way to get Palestinians into a delegation. As a united Arab delegation, the Israelis wouldn't have to recognize the PLO. The Israeli leadership went along with it and, as you know, two American Palestinians were designated to go. That was the first building block. The two Palestinians, were members of the PNC.

A second was getting a backup dialogue with the PLO. We made an effort to do so. We wrote a declaration in August of that year in Alexandria—I actually wrote it—in which (a) the PLO agreed to accept 242, (b) indicated that the refugee language of 242 speaks only of refugees, not of Palestinians and was therefore politically inadequate. They could fill in what they wanted to, but we warned them, “Don't put in too much to make it politically unacceptable to Israel.” and (c) they accept the right of Israel to exist. With Saudi and Egyptian help, Arafat was persuaded to agree to this, but he had to submit it, he said, to the PLO executive committee. By the time he did so, the Syrians had gotten wind of the proposed declaration and, even though the Syrian idea of a united Arab delegation had been accepted, they were clearly not keen on a direct dialogue between the US and the PLO. They used their influence on the PLO executive committee and Arafat lost the vote 11 to 4. That meant we could not have that backup dialogue. But still Carter was ready to go ahead with these two Americans.

The third building block was to get the Soviets on board. The Soviets, who had been bitter about their exclusion all these years and really felt betrayed, and we had consciously pushed them out of the negotiations, there is no question about it. We believed we had very good reasons for doing so—at least Kissinger did. The Soviets were only too pleased to go along with Carter's ideas. The joint declaration, the US-Soviet declaration, was issued in early October, '77. We did go along with certain language that Soviets proposed on legitimate rights of Palestinians, which was picked up by the media with the question, “Is this something new?” The semantics of legitimate rights and other rights had sort of gotten lost in the long and difficult procedural issues that were being discussed, except of course by the Palestinians to whom they meant a great deal. We were ready to go to Geneva in December. We knew that there was a risk that the Soviets would use that international forum for mischief making—political mischief making. So we had worked out with the Egyptians and the Israelis ways and means to limit that possibility. It was agreed that neither of the two co-chairmen, the Soviets or ourselves, would be members of the conference committees, which would consist of the United Arab delegation members and Israeli members. We were convinced that very quickly the parties, in committee, would not be able to agree and would come rushing out and ask for assistance from the co-chairmen —that meant us and the Soviets. We had relations with both sides, the Soviets did not have relations with the Israelis. Therefore their mediatory capacity was limited. While we could not be sure that this would be a foolproof scheme, it seemed the best way of doing it.

Sadat; what was his reaction to the joint US-Soviet statement? There's an Israeli view that it was the issuance of that declaration that caused Sadat to go to Jerusalem. That is utter nonsense. Sadat was delighted about the joint declaration. The declaration, as it was worked out, was checked out almost daily with Fahmy, who was in New York at the time. Sadat said to me, “This is a brilliant move on the part of Carter to bring them in.” He made the comment in the context of our parallel discussions on how we would limit Soviet mischief making capability. The declaration meant that we would now be able to move

forward to Geneva, which meant a great deal to Sadat. He desperately wanted Geneva because, remember, by that time nothing had happened on the peace process for two years. So the Egyptians, contrary to the view that some have who weren't there have since expressed, did welcome that joint statement. But not in order to bring the Soviets in, in a major way, no. But to bring them in to prevent the Soviets from using their blocking capability. It had come to be realized that the Soviets had a blocking capability. In this way, it was hoped, they would not use that blocking capability, and would be official participants and could be managed.

Q: But then it was in the next month I think wasn't it, November 1977, that Sadat suddenly...

EILTS: Well what happened after...Carter reeled in the face of American domestic reaction to that joint declaration. But he never reneged on it. We continued to plan to go to Geneva. Now, the one building block that remained to the plan was developing an agenda for the meeting. That agenda—the development of that agenda—took the form of a working paper. While all of this was taking place in the fall of '77, Dayan came to the UNGA session in New York. He also came down to Washington and saw Carter. Carter said to him, “What do you think the terms of reference ought to be?” And Dayan wrote down, from an Israeli point of view, what these should be. Carter saw no problem with Dayan's draft. He said, “I have to check them out with Fahmy.” Fahmy came a week later and was also invited down to Washington. There, he was shown Dayan's draft. Predictably, Fahmy said, “This is an Israeli draft. It is unacceptable to us.” So Carter said, “Why don't you write whatever you want.” So Fahmy did so. A week or so later, the draft as revised by Fahmy was shown by Carter to Dayan. Now, remember, we're talking about Dayan, equally predictably, found it unacceptable in terms of reference for what would be the reconvened Geneva conference. Carter agreed that Dayan might revise the working paper draft and Dayan did so. By that time Fahmy was back in Cairo. Hence, the revised draft was sent to me in Cairo to pass on to Sadat and Fahmy. They found it unacceptable. They absolutely refused to admit that this revision was an American draft. They said calling

it such was nonsense, it was an Israeli draft. As a result, for a period of about ten days, we were arguing on this issue of the terms of reference. I had instructions to say, “Look, these are the terms of reference, the language doesn't matter. Let's get to Geneva.” The Egyptians responded, “Well, if the language doesn't matter, then why aren't you willing to change it back to what we wanted?” And so we were reaching a point where an impasse had developed. Carter realized this and sent a hand written note to Sadat saying, “I need your help, some bold actions are necessary to break the impasse.” But we were talking about getting to Geneva in order to break that impasse. And the draft terms of reference, the so-called working paper, was the focus of the issue.

Now, Carter, after we had not persuaded the Egyptians to accept it, finally came up with a new proposal, “Let's go to Geneva without terms of reference. Make that the first item of business.” Sadat thought about it for 24 hours and then said, “Yes, let's go to Geneva. Then we're there, no matter how long it takes to draft the agenda.” The proposal to go to Geneva was then sent to the Syrians. But the Syrians never answered, even though they had their united Arab delegation, they never answered. Therefore, without their answer, we didn't know what to do. Sadat, becoming more and more impatient, said, “Peace is slipping through my fingers on procedural grounds.” And then came the Carter letter that I've already mentioned. Sadat came up first with the idea of moving Geneva to East Jerusalem, with all five Security Council members present. We rejected that though. He then proposed, “Let's move Geneva to Jerusalem, with only the Soviets and you as co-chairman.” We also rejected that idea. I remember when I told him this, he said almost in despair, “Well, if you don't like my ideas, don't you have any of your own?” But we had none. It was a period when we were stuck.

Out of that, with Sadat's flair for the dramatic, came his idea of going to Jerusalem.

Q: Sadat's trip to Jerusalem then really transformed the situation with which you were dealing, did it not?

EILTS: Yes, but that was not his intention. He went to Jerusalem in the belief that this was a way of breaking the impasse that had developed to getting to Geneva. By going to Jerusalem, presenting the Arab case to the Knesset, that this would show (a) the Arabs, the Syrians among others, that there was a way of talking to the Israelis on Arab issues, and (b) it would show the Israelis that the Arabs were willing to negotiate.

Now let me just say a word on the origin of Sadat's idea. Where did the idea of going to Jerusalem come from? It is not, as some Israeli revisionists have suggested, the result of Dayan's two meetings with Tuhami in Morocco. (Tuhami was a nominal Deputy Prime Minister in the Egyptian government.) The only reason Sadat sent Tuhami to Morocco was because Sadat wished to accommodate Hassan. After the Dayan-Tuhami meeting, Sadat commented to me that the meeting had really resulted in nothing, Dayan, he said, had presented the same old Israeli views, and he (Sadat) was very unhappy about Dayan's comments as reported by Tuhami.

But for a year or more before the trip to Jerusalem Sadat had been turning over in his mind a proposal made to him that he ought to meet directly with the Israeli leaders. The idea had come from Jewish financiers in Vienna, Paris and London, with whom Sadat would meet once a year on his trips to Europe. They had said, “Look, the best way to undercut Begin, and Begin had by then taken over from Peres, is through direct talks.” That same idea had been passed on to Sadat by King Hassan of Morocco, who was conveying a suggestion of the late Dr. Nahum Goldmann, separately from these Jewish financiers, urging him to meet with the Israeli leadership because that was the best way to work out a deal. These were not the first times that Sadat had heard such views but, now with his confirmed ideas, not acceptable to us, and with the prevailing impasse, he reverted to this possibility. We were also getting to the end of the year (it had become a fetish with him to be at Geneva by the end of December). He put together these several ideas, i.e., the proposals that he meet directly with the Israelis, and, with his flair for the dramatic, his own idea of doing something in Jerusalem. Remember, his earlier proposal to move Geneva

to East Jerusalem. He decided to go to Jerusalem on the 'Id (Moslem feast), which was coming up, and to use the occasion to present the Arab point of view and at the same time, as I've already said, to show the Israelis that the Arabs were willing to negotiate. But he did this not to shift the direction of the peace process, but to get to Geneva, to break the impasse to getting there.

Now when he first told us about this, we said to him, “We didn't think it was going to work that way. But it was up to him to decide. But we didn't think that that would do it.”—that is, do it in terms of getting to Geneva. Nevertheless, in a speech to the Peoples' Assembly, he said at the end of that speech (it was not part of his prepared text, but an extemporaneous utterance) that he'd go anywhere, including to the Knesset, in the interest of peace. Arafat was sitting in the front row.

And then things moved quickly. We had two visiting Congressional delegations in the coming week; first, Melvin Price's Military Affairs Committee; and then a more general one, headed by Jim Wright. As you might imagine, they were almost exclusively interested in his Peoples' Assembly comment about a willingness to go to the Knesset. He was getting—at that time, we're talking about October '77—he was getting his economic aid, but military aid was still very limited, a couple of C-130s. He still wanted substantial US military aid. And, as he saw the interest on the part of these Congressmen, the idea that such a Jerusalem visit would not only help in furthering the peace process impasse, but might also help in getting what he wanted; US military aid. Hence, he decided to take the gamble. The invitation from Begin arrived on a Wednesday—I'd just taken the Wright delegation to meet with Sadat. As they left I said to Sadat, “Mr. President, I think you're going to get an invitation. And you better be sure that you're going to do this, because if this is just talk, you're going to hurt yourself, and hurt Egypt's reputation.” He said, “Yes, I'll do it,” but he said, “There is one thing. I will not receive an invitation from Begin directly. It must come through President Carter. It must be transmitted.” So I flashed that out to Washington and Tel Aviv. I never thought the White House would be efficient enough to get things moving that quickly. The following day, Sadat was going to Damascus—it was

Tuesday, and he was going on a Wednesday to Damascus. By Wednesday morning at 4:00 a.m. I had a flash message from Washington with Begin's invitation and with Carter's transmittal letter. I decided I'd better get these to Sadat before he went to Damascus and not wait until he got back lest the Syrians somehow dissuade him or cause him to change his mind. So I got him out of bed—through the private secure phone—and arranged to meet him before he went to the airport. He was staying out at the Barrages, a place about 20 miles north of Cairo, where he liked to relax. I got there and read him the invitation (I usually read written communications to him). He liked the wording of the Begin invitation, and said, “Yes, I'll do it.”

And then Hosni Mubarak, who was Vice President, came in to take Sadat to the airport. He (Sadat) said, “Show Hosni the invitation.” I did and, as a matter of fact, gave Mubarak the invitation. Mubarak said, “Well, Mr. President, if that's what you want to do, fine, but I suggest that nothing be said until you get back from Damascus tomorrow afternoon. Otherwise you may not get back from Damascus alive if word of this gets out before you go there.” So Sadat said, “That's fine, meet me (speaking to me) in Ismalia tomorrow afternoon at 4:00 p.m. and I'll give you the answer.” Then we flew with him by helicopter to the airport and he went on his way to Damascus. He asked that the Israelis be requested not to make public Begin's invitation.

As I was flying back with Mubarak I said to him, “When does he plan to go?” He said, “This coming Saturday.” It was by then Wednesday afternoon; Thursday, the next day, he was coming back from Damascus. Mubarak also indicated that Sadat wished to send an advance team to Israel on Friday. I said, “I better inform the Israelis because they will have security and other arrangements to make.” “No,” said Mubarak, “nothing is to be said.” But after a long argument I finally got Mubarak's agreement that I could send a message to Ambassador Sam Lewis in Israel asking the Israelis, “If a certain President wants to visit Israel on a Saturday, what time should he arrive?” The answer was, “If a certain President wants to visit Israel, he should come anytime after 6:00, it being the Israeli Sabbath.”

Q: P.M.?

EILTS: Six P.M. The following day I met Sadat in Ismalia. He had had a very tough time in Damascus and was showing the strain. Mamduh Salim, the Prime Minister, Gamasy, the Minister of Defense, Hosni Mubarak, the Vice President, and one or two others were there. Fahmy was not.

The first thing Sadat said to me as we sat in his garden, “What have you got for me?” I replied, “Mr. President, what do you have for me?” “Oh, yes,” he said, “I owe you an answer.” He said, “Yes, I will go and I'd like to send an advance party tomorrow.” By then it was late Thursday afternoon. “Tomorrow I want to send a party at 9:00 A.M. and I want to go on Saturday evening.” I said, “Well, fine, but I'd better get back quickly and make arrangements.” At that point one of his aides came in and said, “There are a lot of newsmen outside, television people. They know something is up.” And Sadat, always receptive to newsmen, said, “All right. Let's get them in. You give me the invitation and they can take pictures of it.” I said, “Mr. President, you have the invitation.” He said, “Oh, do I? What did I do with it?” I said, “You gave it to Mubarak.” And he turned to Hosni, and he said, “Hosni what did you do with it?” Mubarak said, “I left it in Cairo.” So the question arose of some kind of a sheet of paper that I could give Sadat for the benefit of the press.

Now the 'Id was coming up, and I had the customary one-page congratulatory note, which, as you know, is sent by our President to Muslim leaders. I said, “Will this do?” He said, “That's fine. Bring in the press.” So in came the thundering herd in a most aggressive fashion. He greeted them smoking his pipe and said, “Hermann, do you have something for me?” And I said, “Mr. President, I have this for you.” He took the sealed envelope, opened it very deliberately, making sure no TV man was behind him, they were all in front, and nodded his head, closed it, gave it to Mubarak and said, “Tell Mr. Begin that I accept.” So the world thought that the delivery of the Begin invitation was being televised, when in fact the Egyptians already had it.

By that time I really had to get back. I said, “Could you let me have a helicopter, because if you're sending somebody at 9:00 A.M. tomorrow, I have to get back to my Embassy, which is an hour's drive from the airport, and send out flash messages.” Sadat responded, “We have one more thing to discuss, then you can go back with my people in their helicopter.” He said, “This won't take long.” I excused myself and he said, “No, you can stay.” What was the remaining subject? He instructed Mubarak to accept Fahmy's resignation. Fahmy had been on a visit to Tunis just before the Damascus trip and had heard of Sadat's decision to go to Jerusalem and had resigned. Sadat depended very heavily on Fahmy. There were those, including Fahmy, who thought Sadat would never accept it and would back away from the Jerusalem trip idea. Now Sadat was instructing Mubarak to accept Fahmy's resignation and to name Mahmoud Riad, who was Minister of State and a close friend of Fahmy's, as Acting Foreign Minister.

To Mamduh Salem's, the Prime Minister's credit, since he and Fahmy thoroughly disliked each other, Mamduh said, “Mr. President, give me a chance to talk to Fahmy before you do this.” “No,” said Sadat, “Fahmy has decided and I'm not going to have any more of this. Mubarak is to announce my acceptance of Fahmy's resignation.” So there it was.

We all, except Sadat, got on the helicopter for the flight back to Cairo. I was seated next to Gammasi. Fahmy had always said, “When I resign in protest, Gammasi, the Minister of Defense and also Deputy Prime Minister will join me.” I was worried that if this occurred it would bring down the government. I was concerned that Gammasi would also resign and the whole thing would collapse. I said, “General, what are you going to do? I hope you're not going to resign.” He said, “Well, I think the President's totally wrong in what he's doing, but I'm a soldier and I will stand by him.” So Fahmy's resignation did not result in a similar resignation by Gammasi and the government was not brought down.

I got back to the Embassy that evening and sent out a series of flash messages about events. The following morning, the Egyptian advance party went and then Saturday, in the late afternoon, Sadat flew to Israel. When he came back two days later, he called me

and asked me to come over. He was tired, but pleased. He said, “We'll be at Geneva in two weeks. It's all arranged. We'll have a preparatory conference here in Cairo, beginning next Friday, with all of the participants and the following week we'll be at Geneva. Tell Carter.” At the preparatory conference the following week, neither the Syrians, Jordanian nor Palestinians were there. The Soviets also did not appear. Clearly, Sadat's trip did not have the effect that he had expected. As a result, the peace process then took a new and different route. For the first three to four months on that route, it was very rocky indeed, to a point where in mid-January Sadat was speaking very seriously of resigning his office. Begin, he complained, had failed to appreciate the risk he, Sadat, had taken.

Q: Well, President Carter, of course, took an increasing hand in the evolving situation and, in due course, convened the meeting at Camp David at which you were also present. This is, I think, the first time that I can recall that an American President had played such a direct role in foreign policy negotiations over such a long period in a critical situation and I'd appreciate your comments on the Camp David negotiations.

EILTS: Yes. I certainly share your view. I know of no instance where an American President has involved himself as much as Carter did, except perhaps the case of Woodrow Wilson in the Paris Peace Conference, which was a disaster. Carter decided to call the Summit when in the period January to August of '78 the whole area situation seemed to be deteriorating. Begin had made a return visit to Egypt, just before Christmas of '77. Begin and the Israelis thought this had been a great success, Sadat was bitter about it.

The military committee that was set up at Isma'iliya, the Egyptian-Israeli military committee, consisting of Ministers of Defense, had met in January. That meeting had gone all right, but the Political Committee, the Foreign Ministers, (which included the United States), which had met in Jerusalem in the third week of January, fell apart the first day.

Sadat blamed the Israelis; felt they did not appreciate, as he put it, the gesture that he had made, the psychological gesture. The US then convened a Foreign Ministers meeting of Israel, Egypt and the US, which was to take place in London. Because of security threats, however, the British made Leeds Castle available. The purpose of this session was to get the two parties, Egypt and Israel, to put their positions on the table and to ask questions of one another.

Now it wasn't that the parties didn't know each others positions, but we felt—Washington felt—we had to go through this kind of procedural action before we could call for a second Foreign Ministers' meeting at which we would present a proposal of our own. Sadat had consistently pressed us to present a proposal because the Israeli proposal, first made by Begin in December in Ismalia, was unacceptable.

The Leeds Castle meeting broke up in disarray. The Egyptian Foreign Minister, who was there, was bitter about it and reported negatively to Sadat. So our idea then of getting a second Foreign Ministers' meeting, at which we could present an American proposal, backfired. Sadat said, “I'm not participating in another Foreign Ministers' meeting unless something new is added.” Now you know the business of “something new is added” can mean all kinds of things. We argued, and I in particular, that we could add something new and have that second meeting. President Carter decided, however, that the area situation had reached such a point that the risk was too great to wait for another Foreign Ministers meeting. The time had come to have a Summit, even though the gap between the two parties remained great. Some of us worried that the gap was too great. You know a Summit is fine, if you have the area of disagreement narrow. But Carter made the judgement that the situation was too serious to wait for that to happen and therefore called the Camp David Summit.

At Camp David, away from the glare of press, Carter insisted there be no press briefings by any delegation. Indeed, the American press officer would once a day go down the hill to

whatever the little town is in Maryland close to Camp David, and brief the press in a rather anodyne fashion. And the negotiations then began.

Before we went to Camp David, I had seen Sadat prior to my own flight back to Washington. Sadat had said, “I want a confrontation with the Israelis, and I need Carter's help on it. They are not really being responsive to anything, as you know.” At least this was the way he said it, “I want a confrontation.” Begin, as I understand it, reckoned that there would be an effort to get a confrontation.

In a luncheon that we had—the American delegation—had with Carter, the Friday before we went up to Camp David, Carter had said, “I want to do something for the Palestinians,” which I must say gave me great hope. And he said, “You know, I think we should be able to do something, get something done in four or five days.” I remember we were making bets on how long it would take.

Both Sam Lewis, our Ambassador to Israel, and I warned the President at that luncheon, “Don't bring Sadat and Begin together, other than for social events.” The reason was clear. By that time, Sadat's reaction to Begin, despite their earlier meetings, was very negative and bitter. Carter seemed to accept that. To our surprise, however, no sooner had we gotten to Camp David when Carter called Sadat and Begin together and said to Sadat, “Mr. President why don't you read your proposal?” Sadat hadn't been prepared for this, but he had the Egyptian proposal with him and in a monotone he read that proposal. Begin was chafing at the bit. At the end of the presentation, Carter said, “Well, let's now adjourn and meet again tomorrow morning.” Then Carter came to the American delegation. He looked at Sam Lewis and at me, and said, “You fellows told me not to get them together. It worked beautifully. No problem.” The following morning he got them together again. No sooner were they seated when Begin said, “Mr. President, if you're going to accept this man's (Sadat, he was much more polite) proposal, I insist the Israeli proposal be accepted as the basis for discussion.” With that Sadat, pointing to Begin, said, “This man

is responsible for all the problems.” Sparks were flying and Carter had to adjourn the meeting right away.

From that point on the negotiations took place between the American delegation and the Israelis; and the American delegation and the Egyptians. There was no direct negotiating between Egyptians and Israelis. Sadat and Begin didn't meet again except in a social context.

The first ten days—first of all it took much more than a week—by the end of the tenth day we still had no agreement on anything. Every agreement was tentative, conditional on something else. So it went. Carter was becoming very impatient. He had immobilized himself at Camp David for this long a period. And he finally said to the parties, “I have to go back to Washington on Sunday. Either we get something by Sunday, or it's a failure.” By then, of course, his own prestige was heavily invested in this, which was important.

On the evening of the tenth day, a Thursday, Sadat was finally persuaded by Carter, Vance and Ezer Weizman to receive Dayan. Dayan, in his customary forthright fashion, told Sadat, “If anyone has told you, Mr. President, that any Israeli government can get out of the Sinai settlements, they're deluding you. It can't be.” It was Weizman who had told this to Sadat. This so upset Sadat that he called me. He said, “I have to see the President.” He saw President Carter and said, “I'm leaving. If I can't even get the Sinai settlements out of this, what's the use of coming here?” Now that forced Carter, who up to that point had been trying to persuade Sadat to allow the Sinai settlements to remain, if not under IDF—Israeli Defense Force—protection, under UNEF or even Egyptian military protection. Sadat had consistently refused. Carter was now forced to go to Begin and say, “Mr. Prime Minister, here's the situation. Nobody is going to understand why this peace conference fell apart because of your insistence on remaining in Sinai.” And Begin, with obvious reluctance, because it went against everything he stood for, agreed to submit the issue of removing the Sinai settlements to the Knesset “without the whip”, i.e., people would be free to vote their consciences. It was understood that, if the Knesset vote was

negative, anything else that might be worked out at Camp David was null and void. That agreement came into being late at night on the tenth night, a Thursday night, three days before Carter had indicated the conference must close. The remaining two days then were spent in working out, (with Carter and Osama El-Baz on the Egyptian side and Aharon Barak on the Israeli side), in working out a Sinai agreement. That is the Egyptian-Israeli agreement that would deal with Sinai.

The rest of us were involved in working out a West Bank-Gaza autonomy agreement, the so-called “Framework for Peace in the Middle East.” That second document went through 18 drafts and, as you might imagine, as this happens, instead of being strengthened, the document becomes more and more ambiguous. It was no longer constructively ambiguous, but just ambiguous. For example, nobody was quite sure what autonomy meant. To Egypt it meant self-determination, or leading to self-determination. To Israel, it meant a kind of bondage status.

So we ended up on that Sunday morning with a Sinai document that was reasonably explicit and could serve as a good basis for peace negotiations. The West Bank-Gaza document on the other hand, “the Framework for Peace in the Middle East”, was totally ambiguous, subject to divergent interpretations, and lacked anything about the future of Israeli settlements in the West Bank or in Gaza. Carter, however, at the last minute, thought he had an oral agreement from Begin that Israel would undertake a protracted freeze on settlements in the West Bank and in Gaza. By protracted freeze, Carter meant no more settlements until such time as a self-governing Palestinian authority envisaged in the West Bank-Gaza agreement had been set up, however long that would take. Thereafter that self-governing body would negotiate with Israel on the existing settlements and on any future settlements.

Had we in fact obtained that kind of agreement in writing we could probably have sold what was a vague document, West Bank-Gaza as far as Palestinian rights were concerned, to the other Arabs. Carter thought he had it, but it was an oral agreement;

there wasn't time any longer to get a written statement at Camp David; he was getting on the plane to proceed to the White House for the signing ceremony. So it was agreed the letters from Begin; and several letters from Sadat on matters having to do with the agreement; were to be delivered to Carter on Monday.

That Sunday night, after the signing ceremony, but after we went to the State Department and sent messages all over the world, including to Arab leaders, explaining the agreement, and indicating we also had agreement, not textually in the accords but as a side agreement, a protracted settlement freeze for the West Bank and Gaza and asking for their support. By then, Sadat's Foreign Minister had resigned in protest against the Camp David accords when Carter got the letter from Begin on Monday. It didn't speak of a protracted settlement freeze. Instead, it spoke of a three month freeze, tied to the time period stipulated in the Sinai agreement for the conclusion of an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. This had nothing to do with the West Bank-Gaza. Carter would not go back to Begin, he would not himself call Begin and say, “Look, this is not consistent with your agreement of yesterday.” I guess he wasn't sure. Quite frankly, he rushed through finishing the Camp David accords and perhaps allowed himself to be taken in. And then later, that same Monday Begin went to New York and made a public statement on what he meant by autonomy for the West Bank. This made it very clear that what he had in mind was totally different from what we had sent out as our explanatory messages to Arab and other leaders. So the Arab states, as you know, generally wouldn't agree.

Q: A couple of questions that occur to me about the Camp David negotiation and one is that, prior to that period, it had been an article of faith, really, in Washington that, if you were going to have a settlement of the Arab-Israeli issue you had to have a comprehensive settlement; and you mentioned that President Carter initially was in favor of a comprehensive settlement. Yet the Camp David formula clearly was leading in the other direction. And I wonder what happened to derail or divert attention from what had been the settled policy of the US Government?

EILTS: Well, it was not quite that settled. There were those, of course, all along who questioned whether a comprehensive settlement was possible; who argued that you have to do it piecemeal; that the experience of '77, when the Syrians would not respond to going to Geneva without terms of reference, had shown that you could not really count on everybody being involved. Now, Camp David itself, the West Bank-Gaza autonomy "Framework for Peace in the Middle East", had spoken of Jordanian participation in autonomy talks. Palestinians would be included in a Jordanian delegation. While nothing was said about the Syrians and Golan, various statements were made, that if the Syrians were interested, they could also participate. But it was not believed that the Syrians were ready for that. Nobody checked out with King Hussein whether he would play ball. An effort was made at Camp David to get Sadat to call Hussein, who happened to be in Morocco. It was one of those strange things. We can communicate with distant satellites beautifully. On this occasion the telephone connection between Camp David and Hussein in Morocco was terrible. Sadat said, "Hello, hello, hello," and he never did get across to Hussein what had been said about Jordanian participation. Whether, if he had gotten it across, Hussein would have been more receptive, I'm not sure. After all, he wasn't invited to Camp David and was in a sense being taken for granted. But in any case it was arranged that Sadat would meet with Hussein in Rabat as soon as Camp David was over. Sadat, at least, felt convinced that Hussein would go along with this. As it turned out, of course, Hussein didn't. By the time Sadat got to Morocco, Hussein had skipped and was not prepared to meet with Sadat. But the idea at Camp David, Carter's idea, was that if Jordan would join West Bank-Gaza negotiations, they might not be comprehensive in a total sense, but would be so in a more limited sense. All of this assumed Hussein would do as Sadat and Carter thought would be the case.

Moreover, Sadat and Carter both said at the signing ceremony at the White House that the Camp David agreements would be the cornerstone of a comprehensive settlement. They were the first steps in the comprehensive settlement. Well, there were not very many who agreed with that idea, but the vision of a comprehensive settlement remained.

I frankly think that Carter, having since talked to him several times, including last year down in Atlanta, believed at the time that Camp David accords would be the cornerstone of a comprehensive settlement. He thought he had achieved enough, including in terms of Palestinian rights, that others would join in. The Syrians, he acknowledged, were the difficult guys, but that the others would join in. It came as a blow to him when they didn't. And it came as an even greater blow to him when the Saudis didn't support the Camp David accord. Carter was bitter about the Saudis and felt Fahd had betrayed him.

Q: This leads to my second question, because I think it was clear to many of the key people at Camp David, you and others, the career officers who had worked so long on this problem, that this proposal was deficient as you say. It kept getting watered down and so on, and yet I can understand that you were not in a position to exercise much influence on President Carter. And it raises in my mind the question of the role played at Camp David by Secretary Vance. Was there an effort made to convince him to talk to the President and see if some positions could not be worked out which would have a little more likelihood of longevity thereafter?

EILTS: Remember, by the time when we were in that second week, it looked as though it was going to be a defeat; there was concern that the President's prestige would be hurt. Hence, there was a general feeling on the part of almost all people who were involved, and especially Vance and Brzezinski, that something had to come out of this—I don't want to say, to save the President's face—but to prove the President had had some success. This became an imperative. If we had closed the conference after the first or second day it would not have been too great a failure. But to have the conference end 13 days with a failure, that was unacceptable. Now, add to that the fact that Sadat, despite the strong remonstrances of all of the members of his delegation—one of them, as I've said, the Foreign Minister, resigned in disgust—was going along with almost everything that Carter said. Carter would say to Sadat, “Look, don't worry about the semantics of the West Bank-Gaza framework document. When we get to the actual negotiation we'll make something out of this.” And Sadat, having this tremendous confidence in Carter, wanting

American military help, wanting to appear the great statesman, a great leader, was ready to acquiesce each time Carter went to him on that “Framework for Peace document” for an additional semantic change. Sadat agreed, he was after all not a man who dotted the i's and crossed the t's, unlike Mr. Begin. He was a grand seigneur type person. Sadat said, “Alright, it doesn't matter.” And President Carter said to him, “We'll make something out of all of this when we get to negotiations.” Sadat had regularly said to Carter, “I will not let you down.” So at this critical period it was Sadat making concessions. Thus, for Vance and Brzezinski, and Mondale, who would show up regularly—Mondale was very pro-Israeli, as you know—the fact that Sadat was willing to make concessions suggested to them that such concessions were something the traffic could bear. They assumed that Sadat knew best what Arab reaction would be, that the traffic would bear more than some of his advisers and some of us were saying to Carter and Vance. At one point, in a meeting with Carter, Sadat expressed some concerns and said, “You know I'm agreeing to all of this, but the Saudis aren't going to accept this. And if we don't get Saudi support, it's going to be bad.” Carter responded, “Don't worry about the Saudis, Mr. President, I'll take care of the Saudis.” The view that Saudi Arabia was a client state of the US had been one that Sadat had had for a long time. He and I had talked about this very often and I'd told him it wasn't so. When President Carter said this, Sadat looked at me, he had his pipe in his mouth, and sort of smiled. There it was. After Sadat left I said to President Carter, “I'm not Ambassador to Saudi Arabia at the moment, but I know Saudi Arabia well. I can assure you they're not going to accept this. They're not going to do so.” That was the only time that President Carter was noncollegial. Normally he was a remarkable example of collegiality. He said to me, “Hermann, don't you worry about the Saudis, I'll take care of them.” And I figured, “Well, he must know something, either through (US Ambassador) West or some other source” that I wasn't aware of.

And then, of course, came that Monday, when Carter got the letter from Begin that we didn't have the protracted settlement freeze. That same Monday the word was already out that the Saudis had publicly denounced the Camp David accords. So somehow Carter had

misgauged the Saudi view. He had had only two meetings with Saudi leaders, one in May when he met in Washington with Fahd and one very briefly in Riyadh in January of '78. Somehow Carter had gotten the impression that Fahd, in that typical notional way in which he tends to speak, would go along with whatever Carter had worked out. And it came as a shock to Carter that the Saudis didn't agree. It also came as a shock to Sadat.

On the Tuesday, after the signing, Sadat went to the Hill. Wednesday morning he was leaving to return to Cairo. I had to get his approval to publish certain documents he had written to us. I couldn't get him at Blair House before he left. So it was arranged that after he got on his airplane and before they closed the door, I would rush up and get his agreement to publication of the letters. We got through the Andrews departure ceremony all right, Sadat, the smiling gentleman said goodbye to everybody and on the steps of his aircraft waved with a smile. Then he went into the airplane and was out of sight. I rushed up the steps and entered the aircraft and here before me was this smiling gentleman of ten seconds ago shouting at everybody in the aircraft, madder than blazes.

Then he saw me over his shoulder and he turned to me and said, “Hermann, you told me that you would handle the Saudis.” He didn't mean me, he meant the United States. All I could say was, “You know, Mr. President, President Carter is sending Secretary Vance to Saudi Arabia tonight and hopefully something will work out.” But it was a total miscalculation on Sadat's part about the ability of Carter to see things through, including persuading the Saudis. It was also a total miscalculation on Carter, Brzezinski and Vance's parts—less so Vance than Brzezinski's—that Sadat had an influence, a residual influence, with all of the Arabs. Thus, those of us who knew something about the Arab world, our views simply were not accepted. And, of course, there was the imperative of some kind of Presidential success that had developed, “The President has got to come out of this meeting with something,” was the watchword.

Q: Yes. So that there really was nothing that Secretary Vance could have done at that stage.

EILTS: No. Vance several times said to me, “You know I'm surprised that Sadat's agreeing with all of this. But if he agrees I must assume he knows what he's doing. As for the members of his delegation and their objections, well they're just soreheads.”

Q: Would you agree with the statement that has been made that Begin saw the Camp David agreements in practical terms as his giving up the Sinai in return for a free hand in the West Bank?

EILTS: I do indeed. Begin initially hoped also to be able to retain the Sinai settlements. It was a blow to him when he couldn't, but he accepted this. But in accepting it he saw the “Framework for Peace in the Middle East” and the autonomy that was envisaged, for the West Bank and Gaza, as a very narrow autonomy. Something that should never result in Palestinian self-determination or an independent Palestinian state. He was determined that the Israelis would have carte blanche in the West Bank and in Gaza with a view, at the end of the five-year transitional period that was envisioned, of reasserting the Israeli claim to sovereignty over those areas. I don't think the Israeli position, I mean the Likud position, has changed on this.

Q: So in fact it came as no surprise to you personally that the Arab and Palestinian reaction to the Camp David accords was negative?

EILTS: Not at all. As I say, despite the watered down nature of that “Framework for Peace in the Middle East”, the autonomy document, if we had gotten that protracted settlement freeze, tying it, as Carter believed he had with Begin, to an oral agreement, to the establishment of a Palestinian self-governing authority in the West Bank and Gaza, then it might just have had some impact. But when that fell through, the acceptance by the Arabs was a foregone conclusion. As a matter of fact, it turned out that Carter had had a draft letter from the Israelis that same Sunday, before we left Camp David, saying it would only be for three months, that is, tying it to the Sinai agreement. Carter sent it back to Begin saying, “This is not consistent with what we agreed upon.” And he seriously,

apparently, expected an altered letter which would tie the freeze into the autonomy accord. When the letter came in its final form the next day, it was the same as the earlier draft. Now only he knew that, that first letter, so he knew about it. But no, as that document was watered down I talked to Hal and to Roy...

Q: That's Assistant Secretary Hal Saunders and Ambassador-At-Large Roy Atherton.

EILTS: We all agreed that this was not likely to be acceptable. Now poor Hal Saunders, and to (NSC Staff) Bill Quandt also, who was doing so much of the agonizing drafting, and redrafting, and redrafting, and redrafting, had reached a point where he just wanted to get it over with. Yes, it was one of those situations where the professionals—Sam Lewis, of course, was all for this—but where the professionals who knew something of the Arab world were very uneasy about it all. The reasons that I've already indicated, however, our principals said, “Well, Sadat's the guy, he knows what is politically acceptable.” Unfortunately, Sadat and our leadership worked on different assumptions.

Q: Well now, it is a hypothetical question, of course, but in regard to the fact that some believe that the Camp David accords and the subsequent separate peace between Egypt and Israel led directly to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, perhaps contributed to the assassination of President Sadat; and maybe even had a role in the outbreak of hostilities between Iraq and Iran in a certain sense; would you say that it would have been wiser for the United States Government not to have concluded the Camp David accords?

EILTS: No, I don't think that. I agree that the Camp David accords and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, appearing as they did as Egyptian with Israel from the Arab-Israeli side, contributed to the assassination of Sadat. And I don't question, in my own mind, that these agreements encouraged the Israelis to take various actions—the bombing of the Iraqi reactor; the invasion of Lebanon; things of that sort. The Israelis felt they had a free hand in this area. I'm not so certain that it had a significant role in the Iraq-Iran war, but that's a debatable point.

But Camp David was a modest accomplishment. My problem with Camp David is two-fold: one that we gave away too much. Certainly Carter, in going into the Summit, had much grander ideas of what could come out of it, including doing something for the Palestinians. But, given the difficulties of the first ten days; and then, the vast array of nitty-gritty work that had to be done in the last two days, by which time he just had to get back to the White House—these were all important elements of the overall problem. Carter knew the problems intimately because he had briefed himself better than any President, but these issues were not given the time that they deserved.

Several suggestions were made, “Can't we stay a little longer?” But, after all, by that time the President had been away from Washington for two weeks and that was in itself remarkable. My second is this: that then we did not, either under Carter and certainly not under Reagan, take what we had obtained in Camp David and try to develop it into something more meaningful. Once we got the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, that was pretty much it. The following West Bank-Gaza autonomy talks languished. For Carter, of course, he couldn't involve himself. He was in the election campaign. He had the Iranian hostage crisis. He named Bob Strauss—Bob Strauss is a great fellow, the former chairman of the Democratic Party—but Bob didn't like that job. Then he named Ambassador Sol Linowitz. What little was accomplished in the autonomy talks is largely the result of Sol Linowitz's work.

But then came a new Administration with a different sense of priorities. The whole idea of autonomy talks that flowed from Camp David was given short shrift. A minor functionary of Secretary Haig's was named to conduct them. Well, that was not—that kind of a figure, as American representative who had to deal with five Israeli Ministers, (they had by then named five Ministers), and an Egyptian Prime Minister, who was in a position to make anything out of it. And the Reagan administration, it seemed, really didn't care. It had strategic consensus and the Soviets on its mind, things of that sort. So the two problems, in my view, we did not at the end of Camp David work enough to prevent some of the

dangers that, at least many of us, saw. And, second, afterward for a variety of reasons, we did not try vigorously to make something out of Camp David.

Q: Well, now you worked, of course, very closely over the years with President Sadat who was an outstanding leader of his country. I wonder if you could give an assessment as to his character and what motivated his actions?

EILTS: Sadat is the man who went through a number of metamorphoses...

Sadat had been an Arab nationalist, believed in Arabism of the Nasser variety, for a period of time. By the time he became President, however, he seemed to have developed to a point where his nationalism was more Egyptian rather than Arab. By that I mean, while he saw Egypt as an Arab country, and had a continued interest in Egypt's status in the Arab world, he was more concerned with redressing for Egypt the consequences of the '67 war, specifically getting the Sinai returned to Egypt. And that was a significant change. In fact, it was that change that made it possible for the United States to work with him. That did not mean that he discarded or discounted other Arab concerns, including Palestinian concerns, but Sadat was an Egyptian first and foremost. In typical Egyptian fashion he saw Egypt as a civilization of 5,000 years. He was a devout Muslim. Yet, he recalled that Egypt was building pyramids while the Arabs elsewhere were having difficulty putting up tents. And he showed that typical attitude of condescension toward other Arabs which so many Egyptians tend to do. They don't even realize, very often, how this often grates on other Arabs. But in this effort on Sadat's part to recover, first of all, Egyptian losses, specifically the Sinai; the focus was on Sinai and on Egyptian-Israeli relations. And that was precisely what Israel played upon in an effort to separate Egypt from the Arabs. The United States, not perhaps consciously, although Kissinger would cheerfully have done this consciously, but Carter wasn't doing it consciously, the US played into this kind of feeling. Also Sadat, as an Egyptian, could not believe that other Arabs would be prepared to alienate themselves from Egypt. They needed Egypt. I remember, after Camp David and the peace treaty, when Egypt was expelled from the Arab League and

the Islamic Conference, saying once to Sadat, “Mr. President I'm very disturbed about Egypt's isolation in the Arab world.” And Sadat replied with total conviction, “Hermann, Egypt isn't isolated in the Arab world, the Arabs are isolated from Egypt.” Now there was something ethnocentric but typically Egyptian, in all of this. And I think it's a reflection on the way Sadat saw things.

In the period immediately after the '73 war, that is say from October '73 to '75, I sensed a considerable lack of confidence on his part. He wasn't sure whether he had made the right decision to work with the United States for the reasons we've talked about before. Aid was slow in coming, military aid wasn't coming, the peace process was slow. By the time we got Sinai II, however, in other words in September of '75, he had come to have a great sense of self-confidence. There was a marked change in him. He was the leader. He had almost a paternalistic view toward Egyptians. They were his “children”, his “people”. This was not a pharaonic attitude, as some Egyptians have suggested, but he really felt that he was the father and the leader of the Egyptians.

He was a man who thought a great deal. He would sit for long periods of time in silence, smoking his pipe and thinking. His thoughts, I never felt, were very deep; and I don't say that in any pejorative sense; but he thought in strategic terms. He was a conceptualizer in the same sense that Henry Kissinger was. And, of course, he was a man of great courage. He knew he was going against the tide of Arab opinion, not only Egyptian opinion, but Arab opinion in general. But as an Egyptian he felt that he could bring it off, and in that, of course, he was mistaken.

From a family point of view he was a very, very warm individual. To me he was gracious at all times. I saw him almost every day; I often got him out of bed on the secure telephone; yet he was always gracious, always courteous, always forthcoming. When we had differences of view, why, he accepted those without any rancor. And, too, the last time I saw him when he was in Washington, he was always a very close friend and I think he regarded me as a friend.

Q: And what was your assessment of President Carter as a foreign policy mediator?

EILTS: I have a lot of regard for Carter. Carter, first of all, was a man who had vision. He wanted to do something and, while he didn't know the exact nature of what should be done on something like the Arab-Israeli problem, he had a vision of peace, and real peace. He was willing, despite all the odds, despite the heavy burden of past failures that the United States bore, to go ahead and to try to do something. He acquainted himself with details of the Arab-Israeli problem in an almost incredible sense. He read briefing books that were 3-4 feet high, and he had a photographic memory. He knew all the facts and figures. I've never been with a President who knew that much about it. He didn't perhaps fully realize the environment—the political and cultural environment—in which these facts operated. But nevertheless the facts were at his disposal. He involved himself personally in negotiations and in exchanges to a greater extent than any previous President. Perhaps too much so. He got involved in nuts and bolts when that shouldn't have been what he was involved in. He had others to do that.

In dealing with him, apart from that one incident on Saudi Arabia that I've mentioned, Carter was extraordinarily collegial. Carter made it very clear, if one disagreed with him, one should tell him so. He didn't seem to take it amiss. So working with him was interesting, but at the end one came away with the feeling, “Well, he is, after all, the President of the United States; and when the President's prestige is involved, then, no matter how well meaning the President is, he's going to compromise more than necessary in order to avoid a failure.” But he was a fine man to work with; and he certainly was well-meaning; and he was eminently fair in his dealings with the Israelis and with Egyptians. He started off with a strong Israeli bias, but certainly by the time he met Sadat, he and Sadat developed the most remarkable personal relationship. He sought throughout to be fair.

Q: You have been very generous with your time in discussing matters in which you were involved. Is there any final comment you would like to make about either your period in Cairo or any other comments about the Foreign Service?

EILTS: No, I don't think so. Cairo was obviously the high point of my own career. Apart from Cairo itself, which is a dynamic place anytime, the six years that I spent there were extraordinarily active, busy and working under both Republican and Democratic Administrations and at least achieving a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. I guess to me the greatest disappointment has been that since that time the peace process has been allowed to stagnate. There seem to be people in Washington who think you can take a peace process and put it on a shelf and not use it for a period of years; and that you can then take it down and it will be unchanged. They don't seem to understand that there is such a thing as a peace process fatigue. And I'm afraid that's what happened. I just hope that the new Administration, whether it be Bush or Dukakis, will give the problem at least the kind of high priority that Nixon, Ford and Carter gave it, and work again in a rational way to move forward. By that I mean, let's stop this nonsense about one has got to have direct talks. Of course there must be direct talks at some point in negotiations. But every success that we have had in the Middle East peace process, however modest that success was, was the result of the United States putting on the table a piece of paper. Not to impose it on the parties, but as a reflection of the US judgement on what is a reasonable compromise between the two. And then helping them utilize that piece of paper to work out something mutually satisfactory. Unless we're prepared to do that again we're not going to, in my judgement, make any further progress on the peace process.

Q: Thank you very much Ambassador Eilts. This concludes the interview with Ambassador Hermann Frederick Eilts on his career in the Foreign Service. The interview was conducted in Falmouth on August 12th and 13th, 1988 by William Brewer on behalf of The Association for Diplomatic Studies in Washington.

End of interview